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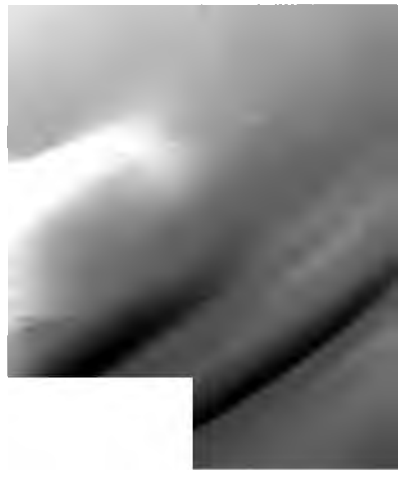

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VENETIAN LIFE

AUTOGRAPH
EDITION
I

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VENETIAN LIFE

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
EDMUND H. GARRETT
IN TWO VOLUMES
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THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

WHEN I first thought of addressing some words to the reader's private eye, as distinguished from his public eye, on the occasion of this latest edition of "Venetian Life," I was tempted by a recollection of my far youth to cast my words in the form of one of those autobiographies in which a shilling, or a pin, or the like related its experiences, and covertly conveyed a good deal of useful instruction in the guise of pleasing adventure. Why not, I wondered, let the book speak not only for itself but for the author too, and give the whole circumstance in which it grew under his hand, and when it was full grown went forth to seek its fortune among the publishers? Why not let it tell how, having found its fortune, hardly and scantly enough, it had prospered on, in spite of every demerit, to its present maturity? In the end, however, I thought better, or worse, of this notion. It could not have been realized without risk of becoming a burden to the reader; and would it have been quite fair to the author, seeing that the book had all the other chapters to itself, and he would be deprived of his sole chance of directly buttonholing the reader?

Meanwhile I was making some minor changes in those chapters, for their advantage, as I believed, though I hoped that in the superabundance of their imperfection the changes might not be much noticed

by any chance stickler for the original text. I could have imagined a reluctance on the part of the text, which it might have expressed whimsically or tragically, if it had been permitted, when I used the pruning knife on certain exuberances of style in which my youth had too eagerly wreaked itself. But enough were left to testify of my joy in the wording, in the days when the wording was apt to come before the thinking, and even before the feeling; only here and there a phrase had been cut out which did not seem to have got beyond the wording. When I was writing the book forty odd years ago, I was always coming back to it from my favorite authors with something glittering or tinkling, fashioned in their manner, to deck my page. These I had removed from it in places, though I had not had the heart to disown all such factitious ornaments. I know them now for imitations, but once I did not, for once I was young and fond, and I hope that the young and fond will still think them genuine, where they remain.

It is incredible how young I was when I came consul to Venice in 1861. If I say I was then twenty-four, I shall not expect others to believe me, for I have begun to doubt it myself in a world where I find most people are sixty or seventy. But I cannot deny the dates of the diary which I kept almost from the first day, and with the strong dyes of which I colored my impressions of Venice in this book. I wrote the diary for myself, but I could not help making it rankly literary, such being my nature; it would otherwise have been affected and conscious; and in the transfer of whole passages from its

pages to these, an entire sincerity as to the fact and a fresh hue of actuality went with whatever of rhetorical pose was inseparable from the record. I could not have been more literary; but I have sometimes wished I had been less ignorant. Yet, after some doubt, I have decided that it was well my life had been so simple and unworldly, since I must therefore let my background of personal experience form only a very modest, or at least a very minor, part of the picture I was trying for.

My experience had been entirely journalistic, with a constant literary intention, and I early wrote out some of those passages from my diary and offered them to our first literary periodical, with an audacity at which I can but wonder in these days of type-written copy; for my sketches were transcribed in the palest ink, and in the worst hand, on the thinnest paper. It was a heart-breaking disappointment when they came back to me, and for a long time I had not the courage to send them anywhere else. After a year or so my acquaintance with an editor of the Boston "Advertiser," passing through Venice, seemed to warrant me in offering that journal a letter about some contemporary events of international interest. It was printed; and then, tardily and timidly, I ventured some of the rejected sketches. These were printed, too; and presently I began to hear of a liking for them: from Lowell in Cambridge, my literary chief, and from my diplomatic chief, Motley, in Vienna, and from more private persons whose praise could not be so precious, but in the dearth and distance of my exile was almost as welcome.

Something more than one half of the book appeared in letters to the Boston "Advertiser." In the meanwhile, and for more than a year afterwards, the scope of the work enlarged itself so as to include the historical chapters, though the chapter on commerce was written after it had passed to a second edition. Much later, after many editions had been exhausted, I added a chapter in which I drew upon my ripened memories. The rest was the effect of immediate observation and research in the atmosphere of the object.

The effect of the research I was disposed to value most, because it cost me the most labor, all manner of studious inquiry being alien to me, while to see things, and paint them as I saw them, was evermore a delight in which there was never the sense of fatigue. I still rather wonder at the number of the books I must have turned over, and actually in some cases read through, to get at that historical stuff; but I do not mind owning that here I had the help of the curiously gifted and variously lettered house-mate elsewhere mentioned, who transcribed sheaves of notes for me in the Library of St. Mark. I could not use them all, and a very slight scrutiny of the result might prove that I liked best to use those which were most pictorial and dramatic.

Yet from the first I had set my face instinctively against that romantic Venice which Byron, and the Byronic poets and novelists, had invented for the easy emotioning of the newcomer. I was tremendously severe with the sentimental legends; if anything I preferred the scandalous legends, as having finally a greater air of knowing-

ness. But that to which I was genuinely affectioned was the real life of the place, as I saw it in the present and read of it in the past. Of course I was an extreme republican, and was for the Democracy as it was before the Doge Pietro Gradenigo in the thirteenth century, and against the Oligarchy which continued after him to the end. In this I freely followed Ruskin, but in æsthetics I was the helpless slave of his over-ethicized criticism. I dare say people no longer go about Venice with his volumes under their arms, but in my day we should not have felt safe in any impression without them. He bade us admire the Byzantine and the Gothic, he bade us abhor the classicistic in all its Palladian formulations, and we eagerly obeyed. I called these and other forbidden formulations indiscriminately by the generic name of Renaissance, when I often meant the rococo, or the baroque, or the peruke style, but such evidences of my ignorance and bigotry I have carefully removed in this edition.

From myself I did not pretend to know anything of art in those days, and I do not pretend to know anything in these days, but sometimes even then I did feel its beauty from myself. At such times I rebelled, violently if tremulously, against the master who ruled me, or the schoolmaster who ferruled me, and made bold to deny that Tintoretto was everything and Titian nothing. In frequenting the churches and galleries, however, I kept to the safer ground of their human interest, as I found it in their votaries and associations. Pictures and statues, architecture itself, may be better or worse,

and one may end as one began by knowing critically nothing of them; but men and women at their prayers, in the fanes which hold the histories of their saints and heroes like the odors of immemorial incense, are always appreciable to the imagination and accessible to the intelligence. I constantly wished to impart the sense of such people and places, but in recurring to the record, I have found that I was sometimes willing to help myself out from the conventionalized sum of others' impressions, and to pass off the result on the reader as an original effect in myself. I have therefore in this revision ventured to suppress some too voluntary Protestant transports concerning the simpler-hearted shows of Catholic piety: the votive offerings of arms, legs, and hearts, the over-dressed Madonnas, the doll-like Bambinos. These might have been as deplorable as I professed, but I doubted if they had moved me in just the sort I professed. I believed rather that I had really felt a pathos in them, the appeal of an ignorant faith which a more reasoned faith would not refuse utterance. I doubt now whether the baroque churches offended my taste so deeply as I pretended; I suspect that they more amused me, and that I would not have turned them Byzantine or Gothic if I could. Certainly I would not have any reader of mine attempt the change; they are of far greater human value as they are than anything he could make them over into.

In behalf of a stricter justice, I have somewhat retrenched my inferences from conditions imperfectly seen or rashly philosophized. The dearest of all my Venetian

friends, "now with God" surely, if purity of life can fit any man for beatitude after death, long ago brought me to grief for these inferences, which might not have been errors, when he mildly shrugged at them in the letter he wrote me about my book, and said, "Perhaps if you had asked farther," meaning that my authorities were too one-sided or prejudiced. He thought that with greater personal knowledge than I had of the social conditions I would not have pronounced them so bad; and it is in reparation to his gentle spirit that I have suppressed some bolder conclusions, and am ready to own that so far as I was directly acquainted with society in Venice, it was no worse than American society as I have since found it in the newspapers. I cannot say why I have been so long in coming to this act of justice, but I shall be willing to have justice for my dereliction delayed yet another forty years.

For the immensely greater part, I have held my hand in the revision of my book. If I were suffered to go back and make my whole life over where I feel it to have been rash and mistaken, senseless and tasteless, I should not know, with all my present advantages, quite how to do it; and this book is so essentially a part of my life that it will not be treated differently from any other part. It remains what I first meant it to be, — a picture of Venice in the last years of the Austrian rule, say from 1861 till 1865. All my forces went into it when I began to write it at twenty-four, and when I got it together, completed if not perfected, at twenty-seven, all my hopes followed it through the registered post to a

London publisher. A little later, I myself, with all my fortunes, followed it to London, where I carried it, browbeatenly, from one publisher to another, and so came home with the promise of the first that he would bring it out if I could get some American house to take five hundred copies. Elsewhere I have told how I managed this, through the good comradeship of a young New York publisher, who used to beat me at shuffleboard on the steamer, and who said one day, in a moment of elation, that he guessed he would chance it.

Since the reader is in this confidential mood with me he will not mind hearing what my gains were from that first edition, which has been followed by so many others. My London publishers issued it on the half-profits system, and when my account for royalties came, there appeared to be eleven pounds and nine shillings due me. It was not much; but when I saw that everything had been charged up against the book, — corrections, stereotyping, printing, paper, binding, advertising, — I did not think it so very little. My American publisher was willing to oblige me by cashing the sum, but his bookkeeper said, "I suppose you know how much it is?" "Yes, eleven pounds and nine shillings." "Oh, no. It's eleven shillings and nine pence." I had not noticed a mystical commission on sales, in the account, which I seemed to have paid in addition to the other expenses, and which made the difference. But I explained that I never was good at English money, and gladly took what was really coming to me. As for the American edition, I spent my whole percentage from it in replacing

certain portions of the London sheets with corrected pages, where the errors seemed too gross. I had then gone to live in Cambridge where errors, especially in foreign languages, were not tolerated; these were in Italian, and worse yet, they were my own blunders. But in view of the friendly acceptance of the book on both shores of the Atlantic, I counted my loss all gain. To have such cordial reviews as began to follow it, one might well consent to any pecuniary mortification; and while I did not boast of my returns from the publishers, I was very willing to show my friends the returns from the critics.

Here at the end I am tempted, as at the beginning, to let the book speak for itself, and express the mortification we have both experienced in later years from its being so often called out of its name. The name was not given it without long doubt and debate, after twenty others had been rejected, and amongst them that by which some people speak of it. "Well," a friend said, only the other week, or month, "I spent the whole time, from St. Louis to New York reading over again your Venetian Days." The book was lying on the table, receiving the author's corrections, and his quick ear caught the plaint to which the other's was deaf: "And at the top of every one of my five hundred pages, could not you read that I am called Venetian Life?" It was hard for the book to bear, but no worse than the author's trial once when the book was not by, and when, being wrought upon in the extreme by a lady who kept talking to him of Venetian Days, he ventured the meek

suggestion, "Life." "What?" she cried. "Oh, but it's Venetian *Days*. I assure you that *my* copy is Venetian Days!"

No doubt a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but quite the same it might not like being spoken of as a pink. Yet here the book is, at the reader's service, whatever he chooses to call it. Kinder readers no book ever had, and if the author could have any further wish concerning it, his wish would be that it might somehow make him personally friends with every friend it has won.

W. D. Howells.

KITTERY POINT, August, 1907.

VENETIAN LIFE

VENETIAN LIFE

I. VENICE IN VENICE

THE POINT OF VIEW — THE FABULOUS AND SEMI-FABULOUS VENICE — THE AUSTRIAN TENURE OF VENICE AND THE SOCIAL SITUATION UNDER IT — THE POLITICAL DEMONSTRATION IN MANNERS AND CUSTOMS.

ONE night at the little theatre in Padua, the ticket-seller gave us the stage-box (of which he made a great merit), and so we saw the play and the by-play. The prompter, as noted from our point of view, bore a chief part in the drama (as indeed the prompter always does in the Italian theatre), and the scene-shifters appeared as prominently as the characters. We could not help seeing the virtuous wife, when hotly pursued by the villain of the piece, pause calmly in the wings, before rushing, all tears and desperation, upon the stage; and we were dismayed to behold the injured husband and his abandoned foe playfully scuffling behind the scenes. All the shabbiness of the theatre was apparent to us; we saw the grossness of the painting and the unreality of the properties. And yet I cannot say that the play lost one whit of its charm, or that the working of the machinery and its inevitable clumsiness disturbed my enjoyment in the least. There was so much truth and beauty in the playing, that I did

not care for the sham of the apparatus and operation, and I presently ceased to take note of it. The illusion which I had thought an essential in the dramatic spectacle, turned out to be a condition of small importance.

I

IT has sometimes seemed to me as if fortune had given me a stage-box at another and grander spectacle, and I had been suffered to see this VENICE, which is to other cities like the pleasant improbability of the theatre to every-day, commonplace life, to much the same effect as that melodrama in Padua. I could not, indeed, dwell three years in the place without learning to know it differently from those writers who have described it in romances, poems, and hurried books of travel, nor help seeing from my point of observation the feint and cheapness with which Venice is usually brought out, if I may so speak, in literature. At the same time, it never lost for me its claim upon constant surprise and regard, nor the fascination of its excellent beauty, its peerless picturesqueness, its sole and wondrous grandeur. It is true that the streets in Venice are canals; and yet you can walk to any part of the city, and need not take boat whenever you go out of doors, as I once fondly thought you must. But, after all, though I find dry land enough in it, I do not find the place less unique, less a mystery, or less a charm. By day, the canals are still the main thoroughfares; and if these avenues are not so full of light and color as some would have us believe, they, at least, do not smell so offensively as

others pretend. By night, they are still as dark and silent as when the secret vengeance of the Republic plunged its victims into the ungossiping depths of the Canalazzo!

Did the vengeance of the Republic ever do any such thing?

Possibly. In Venice one learns not quite to question that reputation for vindictive and gloomy cruelty that alien historians have given to a government which endured so many centuries in the willing obedience of its subjects; but to think that the careful student of the old Republican system will condemn it for faults far different from those for which it is chiefly blamed. At all events, I find it hard to understand why, if the Republic was an oligarchy entirely selfish and despotic, it left to all classes of Venetians so much regret and sorrow for its fall.

So, if the reader cares to follow me to my stage-box, I imagine he will hardly see the curtain rise upon just the Venice of his dreams, — the Venice of Byron, of Rogers, and Cooper; or upon the Venice of his prejudices, — the merciless Venice of Darù, and of the historians who follow him. But I still hope that he will be pleased with the Venice he sees; and will think with me that the place loses little in the illusion removed; and — to take leave of our theatrical metaphor — I promise to fatigue him with no affairs of my own, except as allusion to them may go to illustrate Life in Venice; and positively he shall suffer no annoyance from the fleas and bugs which, in Latin countries, so often get from travelers' beds into their books.

Let us mention here at the beginning some of the

sentimental errors concerning the place, with which we need not trouble ourselves hereafter, but which no doubt form a large part of every one's associations with the name of Venice. Let us take, for example, that pathetic swindle, the Bridge of Sighs. There are few, I fancy, who will hear it mentioned without connecting its mystery and secrecy with the taciturn justice of the Three, or some other cruel machinery of the Serenest Republic's policy. When I entered it the first time I was at the pains to call about me the sad company of those who had passed through its corridors from prison to death; and, no doubt, many excellent tourists have done the same. I was somewhat ashamed to learn afterward that I had, on this occasion, been in very low society, and that the melancholy assemblage which I then conjured up was composed entirely of honest rogues, who might indeed have given as graceful and ingenious excuses for being in misfortune as the galley-slaves rescued by Don Quixote, — who might even have been very picturesque, — but who were not at all the material with which a well-regulated imagination would deal. The Bridge of Sighs was not built till the end of the sixteenth century, and no romantic episode of political imprisonment and punishment (except that of Antonio Foscarini) occurs in Venetian history later than that period. But the Bridge of Sighs could have nowise a savor of sentiment from any such episode, being, as it was, merely a means of communication between the Criminal Courts sitting in the Ducal Palace, and the Criminal Prison across the little canal. Housebreakers,

cut-purse knaves, and murderers do not commonly impart a poetic interest to places which have known them; and yet these are the only sufferers on whose Bridge of Sighs the whole sentimental world has looked with pathetic sensation ever since Byron drew attention to it. The name of the bridge was given by the people from that opulence of compassion which enables the Italians to pity even rascality in difficulties.

Political offenders were not confined in the "prison on each hand" of the poet, but in the famous Pozzi (literally, wells) or dungeons under the Ducal Palace. And what fables concerning these cells have not been uttered and believed! For my part, I prepared my coldest chills for their exploration, and I am not sure that before I entered their gloom some foolish and lying literature was not shaping itself in my mind, to be afterward written out as my emotions on looking at them. I do not say now that they are calculated to enamour the unimpounded spectator with prison life; but they are certainly far from being as bad as I hoped. They are not joyously light nor particularly airy, but their occupants could have suffered no extreme physical discomfort; and the thick wooden casing of the interior walls evinces at least the intention of the state to inflict no wanton hardships of cold and damp.

But on whose account had I to be interested in the Pozzi? It was difficult to learn, unless I took the word of sentimental hearsay. I began with Marin Falier, but history would not permit the doge to languish in these dungeons for a moment. He was imprisoned in the

apartments of state, and during one night only. His fellow-conspirators were hanged nearly as fast as taken.

Failing so signally with Falier, I tried several other political prisoners of sad and famous memory with scarcely better effect. To a man, they struggled to shun the illustrious captivity assigned them, and escaped from the Pozzi by every artifice of fact and figure.

The Carraras of Padua were put to death in the city of Venice, and their story is the most pathetic and romantic in Venetian history. But it was not the cells under the Ducal Palace which witnessed their cruel taking-off: they were strangled in the prison formerly existing at the top of the palace, called the Torresella.[1] It is possible, however, that Jacopo Foscari may have been confined in the Pozzi at different times about the middle of the fifteenth century. With his fate alone, then, can the horror of these cells be satisfactorily associated by those who relish the dark romance of Venetian annals; for it is not to be expected that the less tragic fortunes of Carlo Zeno and Vittore Pisani, who may also have been imprisoned in the Pozzi, can move the true sentimentalizer. Certainly, there has been anguish enough in the prisons of the Ducal Palace, but we know little of it by name, and cannot confidently relate it to any great historic presence.

Touching the Giant's Stairs in the court of the palace, the inexorable dates would not permit me to rest in the delusion that the head of Marin Falier had once stained them as it rolled bloodily to the ground — at the end

[1] Gallicioli, *Memorie Venete*.

of Byron's tragedy. Nor could I keep unimpaired my vision of the Chief of the Ten brandishing the sword of justice, as he proclaimed the traitor's death to the people from between the two red columns in the southern gallery of the palace; — that façade was not built till nearly a century later.

I suppose — always judging by my own average experience — that, besides these gloomy associations, the name of Venice will conjure up scenes of brilliant and wanton gayety, and that in the foreground of the brightest picture will be the Carnival of Venice, full of antic delight, romantic adventure, and lawless prank. But the carnival, with all the old merry-making life of the city, is now quite obsolete, and, in this way, the conventional, masquerading, pleasure-loving Venice has become as gross a fiction as if, like that other conventional Venice of which I have but spoken, it had never existed. There is no greater social dullness and sadness, on land or sea, than in contemporary Venice.

The causes of this change lie partly in the altered character of the whole world's civilization, partly in the increasing poverty of the city, doomed four hundred years ago to commercial decay, and chiefly (the Venetians would be apt to tell you wholly) in the implacable anger, the inconsolable discontent, with which the people regard their present political condition.

II

IF there is more than one opinion among men elsewhere concerning the means by which Austria acquired

Venetia and the tenure by which she holds the province, there would certainly seem to be no division on the question in Venice. To the stranger first inquiring into public feeling, there is something almost sublime in the unanimity with which the Venetians appear to believe that these means were iniquitous, and that this tenure is abominable; and though shrewder study and carefuler observation will develop some interested attachment to the present government, and some interested opposition to it; though after-knowledge will discover, in the hatred of Austria, enough meanness, lukewarmness, and selfish ignorance to take off its sublimity, the hatred is still found marvelously unanimous and bitter. I speak advisedly, and with no disposition to discuss the question or exaggerate the fact. Exercising at Venice official functions by permission and trust of the Austrian government, I cannot regard the cessation of those functions as release from obligations both to that government and my own, which render it improper for me, so long as the Austrians remain in Venice, to criticise their rule, or contribute, by comment on existing things, to embitter the feeling against them elsewhere. I may, nevertheless, speak dispassionately of facts, of the abnormal social and political state of the place; and I can certainly do this, for the present situation is disagreeable in many ways to the stranger forced to live there, — the inappeasable hatred of the Austrians by the Italians is so illiberal in application to those in any wise consorting with them, and so stupid and puerile in many respects, that I think the annoyance which it gives the

foreigner might well damp any passion with which he was disposed to speak of its cause.

This hatred of the Austrian dates in its intensity from the defeat of patriotic hopes of union with Italy, in 1859, when Napoleon III found the Adriatic at Peschiera, and the peace of Villafranca was concluded. But it is not to be supposed that a feeling so general, and so thoroughly interwoven with Venetian character, is altogether recent. Consigned to the Austrians by Napoleon I, confirmed, by the treaties of the Holy Alliance, in the subjection into which she fell a second time after Napoleon's ruin, defeated in several attempts to throw off her yoke, and loaded with heavier servitude after the fall of the short-lived Republic of 1849, — Venice has always hated her masters with an exasperation deepened by each remove from the hope of independence, and she now detests them with a rancor which no concession short of their absolute relinquishment of dominion would appease.

Instead of finding that public gayety and private hospitality in Venice for which the city was once famous, the stranger finds himself planted between two hostile camps, with merely the choice of sides open to him. Neutrality is solitude and friendship with neither party; society is exclusive association with the Austrians or with the Italians. The latter do not spare one of their own number if he consorts with their masters, and though a foreigner might expect greater allowance, it is seldom shown him. To be seen in the company of officers is enmity to Venetian freedom, and in the case

of Italians it is treason to country and to race. Of course, in a city where there is a large garrison and a great many officers who have nothing else to do, there is inevitably some international love-making, although the Austrian officers are rigidly excluded from association with the citizens. But the Italian who marries an Austrian severs the dearest ties that bind her to life, and remains an exile in the heart of her country. Her friends mercilessly cast her off, as they cast off everybody who associates with the dominant race. In rare cases I have known Italians to receive foreigners who had Austrian friends, but this with the explicit understanding that there was to be no sign of recognition if they met them in the company of these detested acquaintance.

There are all degrees of intensity in Venetian hatred, and after hearing certain persons pour out the gall of bitterness upon the Austrians, you may chance to hear these persons spoken of as tepid in their patriotism by yet more fiery haters. Yet it must not be supposed that the Italians hate the Austrians as individuals. On the contrary they have rather a liking for them — rather a contemptuous liking, for they think them somewhat slow and dull-witted — and individually the Austrians are amiable people, and try not to give offense. The government is also very strict in its control of the military. I have never seen the slightest affront offered by a soldier to a citizen; and there is evidently no personal ill-will engendered. The Austrians are simply hated as the means by which an alien and despotic government is imposed upon a people believing themselves born for

freedom and independence. This hatred, then, is a feeling purely political, and there is political machinery by which it is kept in a state of perpetual tension.

The Comitato Veneto is a body of Venetians residing within the province and abroad, who have charge of the Italian interests, and who work in every way to promote union with the dominions of Victor Emanuel. They live for the most part in Venice, where they have a secret press for the publication of their addresses and proclamations, and where they remain unknown to the police, upon whose spies they maintain an espionage. On every occasion of interest, the Committee is sure to make its presence felt; and from time to time persons find themselves in the possession of its printed circulars, stamped with the Committee's seal; but no one knows how or whence they came. Constant arrests of suspected persons are made, but no member of the Committee has yet been identified; and it is said that the mysterious body has its agents in every department of the government, who keep it informed of inimical action. The functions of the Committee are multiplied and various. It takes care that on all patriotic anniversaries (such as that of the establishment of the Republic in 1848, and that of the union of the Italian States under Victor Emanuel in 1860) salutes shall be fired in Venice, and a proper number of red, white, and green lights displayed. It inscribes revolutionary sentiments on the walls; and all attempts on the part of the Austrians to revive popular festivities are frustrated by the Committee, which causes petards to be exploded in the Place of

St. Mark, and on the different promenades. Even the churches are not exempt from these demonstrations: I was present at the Te Deum performed on the Emperor's birthday, in St. Mark's, when the moment of elevating the host was signalized by the bursting of a petard in the centre of the cathedral. All this, which seems of questionable utility, and worse than questionable taste, is approved by the fiercer of the Italianissimi, and though possibly the strictness of the patriotic discipline in which the members of the Committee keep their fellow-citizens may gall some of them, yet any public demonstration of content, such as going to the opera, or to the Piazza while the Austrian band plays, is promptly discontinued at a warning from the Committee. It is, of course, the Committee's business to keep the world informed of public feeling in Venice, and of each new act of Austrian severity. Its members are inflexible men, whose ability has been as frequently manifested as their patriotism.

The Venetians are now, therefore, a nation in mourning, and have, as I said, disused all their former pleasures and merry-makings. Every class, except a small part of the resident *titled* nobility (a great part of the nobility is in either forced or voluntary exile), seems to be comprehended by this feeling of despondency and suspense. The poor of the city formerly found their respite and diversion in the numerous holidays which fell in different parts of the year, and which, though religious in their general character, were still inseparably bound up in their origin with ideas of patriotism and national glory. Such of these holidays as related to

the victories and pride of the Republic naturally ended with her fall. Many others, however, survived this event in all their splendor, but there is not one celebrated now as in other days. It is true that the churches still parade their pomps in the Piazza on the day of Corpus Christi; it is true that the bridges of boats are still built across the Canalazzo to the church of the Salute and across the Canal of the Giudecca to the temple of the Redentore, on the respective festivals of these churches; but the concourse is always meagre, and the mirth is forced and ghastly. The Italianissimi have so far imbued the people with their own ideas and feelings, that the recurrence of the famous holidays now merely awakens them to lamentations over the past and vague longings for the future.

As for the carnival, which once lasted six months of the year, charming hither all the idlers of the world by its peculiar splendor and variety of pleasure, it does not, as I said, any longer exist. It is dead, and its shabby ghost is a party of beggars, in masks and women's dresses, who go from shop to shop blowing horns, and droning forth a stupid song, and levying tribute upon the shopkeepers. The crowd through which these melancholy jesters pass, regards them with a pensive scorn, and goes about its business untempted by the delights of carnival.

All other social amusements have shared in greater or less degree the fate of the carnival. At some houses conversazioni are still held, and it is impossible that balls and parties should not now and then be given.

But the greater number of the nobles and the richer of the professional classes lead for the most part a life of listless seclusion, and attempts to lighten the general gloom and heaviness in any way are not looked upon with favor. By no sort of chance are Austrians, or Austriacanti ever invited to participate in the pleasures of Venetian society.

III

AS the social life of Italy, and especially of Venice, was in great part to be once enjoyed at the theatre, at the cafés, and at the other places of public resort, so is its absence now to be chiefly noted in those places. No lady of perfect standing among her people goes to the opera, and the men never go in the boxes, but if they frequent the theatre at all, they take places in the pit, in order that the house may wear as empty and dispirited a look as possible. Occasionally a paper bomb is exploded in the theatre, as a note of reminder, and as a means of keeping away such of the nobles as are not enemies of the government. As it is less easy for the Austrians to participate in the diversion of comedy, it is a less offense to attend the comedy, though even this is not good Italianissimism. In regard to the cafés, there is a perfectly understood system by which the Austrians go to one, and the Italians to another; and Florian's, in the Piazza, seems to be the only common ground in the city on which the hostile forces consent to meet. This is because it is thronged with foreigners of all nations, and to go there is not thought a demon-

stration of any kind. But the other cafés in the Piazza do not enjoy Florian's cosmopolitan immunity, and nothing would create more wonder in Venice than to see an Austrian officer at the Specchi; unless, indeed, it were the presence of a good Italian at the Quadri.

It is in the Piazza that the tacit demonstration of hatred and discontent chiefly takes place. Here, thrice a week, in winter and summer, the military band plays that exquisite music for which the Austrians are famous. The selections are usually from Italian operas, and the attraction is the hardest of all others for the Italian to resist. But he does resist it. There are some noble ladies who have not entered the Piazza while the band was playing there, since the fall of the Republic of 1849; and none of good standing for patriotism have attended the concerts since the treaty of Villafranca in '59. Until very lately, the promenaders in the Piazza were exclusively foreigners, or else the families of such government officials as were obliged to show themselves there. Last summer, however, before the Franco-Italian convention for the evacuation of Rome revived the drooping hopes of the Venetians, they had begun visibly to falter in their long endurance. But this was, after all, only a slight and transient weakness. As a general thing, now, they pass from the Piazza when the music begins, and walk upon the long quay at the sea-side of the Ducal Palace; or if they remain in the Piazza they pace up and down under the arcades on either side; for Venetian patriotism makes a delicate distinction between listening to the Austrian band in

the Piazza and hearing it under the Procuratie. As soon as the music stops the Austrians disappear, and the Italians return to the Piazza.

The catalogue of demonstrations cannot be made full, and it need not be made any longer. The political feeling in Venice affects her prosperity in a far greater degree than may appear to those who do not understand how large an income the city formerly derived from making merry. The poor have to lament not merely the loss of their holidays, but also of the fat employments and bountiful largess which these occasions threw into their hands. With the exile or the seclusion of the richer families, and the reluctance of foreigners to make a residence of the gloomy and dejected city, the trade of the shopkeepers has fallen off; the larger commerce of the place has also languished and dwindled year by year; while the cost of living has constantly increased, and heavier burdens of taxation have been laid upon the impoverished and despondent people. In all this, Venice is but a type of the whole province of Venetia.

The alien life to be found in the city is scarcely worth noting. The Austrians have a casino, and they give balls and parties, and now and then make some public manifestation of gayety. But they detest Venice as a place of residence, being naturally averse to living in the midst of a people who shun them like a pestilence. Other foreigners, as I said, are obliged to take sides for or against the Venetians, and it is amusing enough to find the few English residents divided into Austriacanti

and Italianissimi.[1] Even the consuls of the different nations, who are in every way bound to neutrality and indifference, are popularly reputed to be of one party or the other.

The present situation has now endured five years, with only slight modifications by time, and only faint murmurs from some of the more impatient, that *bisogna, una volta o l'altra, romper il chiodo* (sooner or later the nail must be broken). As the Venetians are a people of indomitable perseverance, long schooled to obstinacy by oppression, I suppose they will hold out till their union with the kingdom of Italy. They can do nothing of themselves, but they seem content to wait forever in their present gloom. How deeply their attitude affects their national character I shall inquire hereafter, when I come to look somewhat more closely at the spirit of their demonstration.

For the present, it is certain that the discontent of the people has its peculiar effect upon the city as the stranger sees its life, making it more and more ghostly and sad, and giving it a pathetic charm which I would fain transfer to my pages; but failing that, would pray the reader to remember as a fact to which I must be faithful in all my descriptions of Venice.

[1] Austriacanti are people of Austrian politics, though not of Austrian birth. Italianissimi are those who favor union with Italy at any cost.

II. ARRIVAL AND FIRST DAYS IN VENICE

DEFEAT OF ROMANTIC EXPECTATION IN THE FIRST EXPERIENCE OF VENICE — ESSENTIAL DRAMA OF THE HOUR AND PLACE — AT HOME IN THE BEAUTIFUL — PERFECT DEMOCRACY OF THE OBJECTS OF INTEREST — THE PIAZZA AND CHURCH OF ST. MARK — THE ISLANDS OF THE LAGOONS — THE COFFEE BURNER — THE CAKE VENDER — THE SPIRIT AND INFLUENCE OF VENICE.

IT does not really matter just when I first came to Venice; yesterday and to-day are the same here; but I arrived one winter morning about five o'clock, and was not so full of Soul as I might have been in warmer weather. Yet I was resolved not to go to my hotel in the omnibus (the large many-seated boat so called), but to have a gondola solely for myself and my luggage. The porter who seized my valise in the station inferred from some very polyglottic Italian of mine the nature of my wish, and ran out and threw that slender piece of luggage into a gondola. I followed, lighted to my seat by a beggar in picturesque and desultory costume. He was one of a class of mendicants whom I came, for my sins, to know better in Venice, and whom I dare say every traveler recollects, — the ruthless tribe who hold your gondola to shore, and affect to do you a service and not a displeasure, and pretend not to be abandoned imposters. The

Venetians call them *gransieri*, or crab-catchers; but as yet I did not know the name or the purpose of this *poverino*[1] at the station, but merely saw that he had the Venetian eye for color: in the distribution and arrangement of his fragments of dress he had produced some miraculous effects of red, and he was altogether as infamous a figure as any friend of brigands would like to meet in a lonely place. He did not offer to stab me and sink my body in the Grand Canal, as, in all Venetian keeping, I felt that he ought to have done; but he implored an alms, and I hardly know now whether to exult or regret that I did not understand him, but left him empty-handed. I suppose that he withdrew the blessings which he had advanced me, as we pushed out into the canal; but I heard nothing, for the wonder of the city was already upon me. All my nether-spirit, so to speak, was dulled and jaded by the long, cold, railway journey from Vienna, while every surface-sense was taken and tangled in the bewildering brilliancy and novelty of Venice. For there can be nothing else in the world so full of glittering and exquisite surprise, as that first glimpse of Venice which the traveler catches as he issues from the railway station by night, and looks upon her peerless strangeness. There is something in the blessed breath of Italy (how quickly, coming south, you know it, and how bland it is, after the harsh, transalpine air!) which prepares you for your nocturnal advent into the place; and O you!

[1] *Poverino* is the compassionate generic for all unhappy persons who work for a living in Venice, as well as many who do not.

whoever you are, that journey toward this enchanted city for the first time, let me tell you how happy I count you! There lies before you, for your pleasure, the spectacle of such singular beauty as no picture can ever show you or book tell you, — beauty which you shall feel perfectly but once, and regret forever.

I

FOR my own part, as the gondola slipped away from the blaze and bustle of the station down the gloom and silence of the broad canal, I forgot that I had been freezing two days and nights; that I was at that moment very cold and a little homesick. I could at first feel nothing but that beautiful silence, broken only by the star-silvered dip of the oars. Then on either hand I saw stately palaces rise gray and lofty from the dark waters, holding here and there a lamp against their faces, which brought balconies, and columns, and carven arches into momentary relief, and threw long streams of crimson into the canal. I could see by that uncertain glimmer how fair was all, but not how sad and old; and so, unhaunted by any pang for the decay that afterward saddened me amid the forlorn beauty of Venice, I glided on. I have no doubt it was a proper time to think all the fantastic things in the world, and I thought them; but they passed vaguely through my mind, without interrupting the sensations of sight and sound. The past and present mixed there, and the moral and material were blent in the sentiment of utter novelty and surprise. The quick boat slid through old troubles of mine, and unlooked-for

events gave it the impulse that carried it beyond, and safely around sharp corners of life. All the while I knew that this was a progress through narrow and crooked canals, and past marble angles of palaces. But I did not know then that my fine confusion of sense and spirit was the first faint intimation of the charm of life in Venice.

Dark, funereal barges like my own had flitted by, and the gondoliers had warned each other at every turning with hoarse, lugubrious cries; the lines of balconied palaces had never ended; here and there at their doors larger craft were moored, with dim figures of men moving vaguely about on them. At last we had passed abruptly out of the Grand Canal into one of the smaller channels, and from comparative light into a darkness only remotely affected by some far-streaming corner lamp. But always the pallid, stately palaces; always the dark heaven with its trembling stars above, and the dark water with its trembling stars below; but now innumerable bridges, and an utter lonesomeness, and ceaseless sudden turns and windings. One could not resist a vague feeling of anxiety, in these strait and solitary passages, which was part of the strange enjoyment of the time, and which was referable to the novelty, the hush, the darkness, and the piratical appearance and unaccountable pauses of the gondoliers. Was not this Venice, and is not Venice forever associated with bravoes and unexpected dagger-thrusts? That valise of mine might represent fabulous wealth to the uncultivated imagination. Who, if I made an outcry,

could understand the facts? To move on was relief; to pause was regret for past transgressions mingled with good resolutions for the future. But I felt the liveliest mixture of all these emotions, when, slipping from the cover of a bridge, the gondola suddenly rested at the foot of a stairway before a closely-barred door. The gondoliers rang and rang again, while their passenger

"Divided the swift mind,"

in the wonder whether a door so grimly bolted and austerely barred could possibly open into a hotel, with cheerful overcharges for candles and service. But as soon as the door opened, and he beheld the honest swindling countenance of a hotel *portier*, he felt secure against everything but imposture, and all wild absurdities of doubt and conjecture at once faded from his thought, when the *portier* suffered the gondoliers to make him pay a florin too much.

So, I had arrived in Venice, and I had felt the influence of that complex spell which she lays upon the stranger. I had caught the most alluring glimpses of the beauty which cannot wholly perish while any fragment of her sculptured walls nods to its shadow in the canal; I had been penetrated by a deep sense of the mystery of the place, and I had been touched already by the anomaly of modern life amid scenes where its presence offers, according to the humor in which it is studied, constant occasion for annoyance or enthusiasm, delight or sadness.

II

I FANCY that the ignorant impressions of the earlier days after my arrival need scarcely be set down even in this perishable record; but I would not wholly forget how, though isolated from all acquaintance and alien to the place, I yet felt curiously at home in Venice from the first. I believe it was because I had, after my own fashion, loved the beautiful, that I here found the beautiful, where it is supreme, full of society and friendship, speaking a language which, even in its unfamiliar forms, I could partly understand, and at once making me citizen of that Venice from which I can never be exiled. It was not in the presence of the great and famous monuments of art alone that I felt at home,—indeed, I could as yet understand their excellence and grandeur only very imperfectly,—but wherever I wandered through the strange and marvelous city, I found the good company of

"The fair, the old;"

and, to tell the truth, I think it is the best company in Venice, and I learned to turn to it later from other companionship with a kind of relief.

My first rambles, moreover, had a peculiar charm which knowledge of locality has since taken away. They began commonly with some purpose or destination, and ended by losing me in the intricacies of the narrowest, crookedest, and most inconsequent little streets in the world, or left me cast away upon the unfamiliar waters of some canal as far as possible from

the point aimed at. Dark and secret courts lay in wait for my blundering steps, and I was incessantly surprised and brought to surrender by paths that beguiled me up to dead walls, or the sudden brinks of canals. The wide and open squares before the innumerable churches of the city were equally victorious, and continually took me prisoner. But all places had something rare and worthy to be seen: if not loveliness of sculpture or architecture, at least interesting squalor and picturesque wretchedness; and I believe I had less delight in proper Objects of Interest than in the foul neighborhoods that reeked with unwholesome winter damps below, and peered curiously out with frowzy heads and beautiful eyes from the high, heavy-shuttered casements above. Every court had its carven well to show me, in the noisy keeping of the water-carriers and the slatternly, statuesque gossips of the place. The remote and noisome canals were pathetic with empty old palaces peopled by herds of poor, that decorated the sculptured balconies with the tatters of epicene linen, and patched the lofty windows with obsolete hats.

I found the night as full of beauty as the day, when caprice led me from the brilliancy of St. Mark's and the glittering streets of shops that branch away from the Piazza, and lost me in the dim recesses of the courts, or the tangles of the distant alleys, where the dull little oil-lamps vied with the tapers burning before the street-corner shrines of the Virgin (of old the sole means of street lighting at Venice), in making the way obscure,

and deepening the shadows about the doorways and under the arches. I remember distinctly, among the beautiful nights of that time, the soft night of late winter which first showed me the scene you may behold from the Public Gardens at the end of the long concave line of the Riva degli Schiavoni. Lounging there upon the southern parapet of the Gardens, I turned from the dim bell-towers of the evanescent islands in the east (a solitary gondola gliding across the calm of the water, and striking its moonlight silver into multitudinous ripples), and glanced athwart the vague shipping in the basin of St. Mark, and saw all the lights from the Piazzetta to the Giudecca making a crescent of flame in the air, and casting deep into the water under them a crimson glory that sank also down and down in my own heart, and illumined all its memories of beauty and delight. Behind these lamps rose shadowy masses of church and palace; the moon stood bright and full in the heavens, the gondola drifted away to the northward; the islands of the lagoons seemed to rise and sink with the light palpitations of the waves like pictures on the undulating fields of banners; the stark rigging of a ship showed black against the sky; the Lido sank from sight upon the east, as if the shore had composed itself to sleep by the side of its beloved sea to the music of the surge that gently beat its sands; the yet leafless boughs of the trees above me stirred themselves together, and out of one of those trembling towers in the lagoons, one rich, full sob burst from the heart of a bell, too deeply stricken with the glory of the scene, and suffused the

languid night with the murmur of luxurious, ineffable sadness.

But there is a perfect democracy in the realm of the beautiful, and whatsoever pleases is equal to any other thing there, no matter how low its origin or humble its composition; and the magnificence of that moonlight scene gave me no deeper joy than I won from the fine spectacle of an old man whom I saw burning coffee one night in the little court behind my lodgings, and whom I recollect now as one of the most interesting people I saw in my first days at Venice. All day long the air of that neighborhood had reeked with the odors of the fragrant berry, and all day long this patient old man — sage, let me call him — had turned the sheet-iron cylinder in which it was roasting over an open fire, after the picturesque fashion of roasting coffee in Venice. Now that the night had fallen, and the stars shone down upon him, and the red of the flame luridly illumined him, he showed yet more noble and venerable. Mere humanity has its own grandeur in Italy; and it is not hard here for the artist to find the primitive types with which genius loves to deal. As for this old man, he had the beard of a saint, and the dignity of a senator, harmonized with the squalor of a beggar, superior to which shone his simple, unconscious grandeur of humanity. A vast and calm melancholy, which had nothing to do with burning coffee, dwelt in his aspect and attitude; and if he had been some dread supernatural agency, turning the wheel of fortune, and doing men, instead of coffee, brown, he could not have looked more sadly

and weirdly impressive. When, presently, he rose from his seat, and lifted the cylinder from its place, and the clinging flames leaped after it, and he shook it, and a volume of luminous smoke enveloped him and glorified him — then I felt with secret anguish that he was beyond art, and turned despairing from the spectacle of that sublime and hopeless magnificence.

At other times (but this was in broad daylight) I was moved by the æsthetic perfection of a certain ruffian boy, who sold cakes of baked Indian meal to the soldiers in the military station near the Piazza, and whom I often noted from the windows of the little cafés there, where you get an excellent *caffè bianco* (coffee with milk) for ten soldi and one to the waiter. I have reason to fear that this boy dealt over-shrewdly with the Austrians, for a pitiless war raged between him and one of the sergeants. His hair was dark, his cheek was of a brown better than olive; and he wore a brave cap of red flannel, drawn down to eyes of lustrous black. For the rest, he gave unity and coherence to a jacket and pantaloons of heterogeneous elements, and, such was the elasticity of his spirit, a buoyant grace to feet encased in wooden-heeled shoes. Habitually came a barrel-organist, and ground before the barracks, and

> "Took the soul
> Of that waste place with joy;"

and ever, when this organist came to a certain lively waltz, and threw his whole soul, as it were, into the crank of his instrument, my beloved ragamuffin failed

not to seize another cake-boy in his arms, and, thus embraced, to whirl through a wild inspiration of figures, in which there was something grotesquely rhythmic, something of barbaric magnificence, spiritualized into a grace of movement beyond the energy of the North and the fervor of the East. It was coffee and not wine that I drank, but I fable all the same that I saw reflected in this superb and artistic mastery of the difficulties of dancing in that unfriendly foot-gear, something of the same genius that combated and vanquished the elements, to build its home upon sea-washed sands in marble structures of airy and stately splendor, and gave to architecture new glories full of eternal surprise.

III

So, I grew early into sympathy and friendship with Venice, and being newly from a land where everything, morally and materially, was in good repair, I rioted sentimentally on the picturesque ruin, the pleasant discomfort and hopelessness of everything about me there. It was not yet the season to behold all the delight of the lazy, out-door life of the place; but nevertheless I could not help seeing that great part of the people, both rich and poor, seemed to have nothing to do, and that nobody seemed to be driven by any inward or outward impulse. When, however, I ceased (as I must in time) to be merely a spectator of this idleness, and learned that I too must assume my share of the common indolence, I found it a grievous burden. Old habits of work, old habits of hope, made my end-

less leisure irksome to me, and almost intolerable when I ascertained fairly and finally that in my desire to fulfill long-cherished but, after all, merely general designs of literary study, I had forsaken wholesome struggle in the currents where I felt the motion of the age, and had drifted into a lifeless eddy of the world, remote from incentive and sensation.

For such is Venice, and the will must be strong and the faith indomitable in him who can long keep, amid the influences of her stagnant quiet, a practical belief in the great moving, anxious, toiling, aspiring world outside. When you have yielded, as after a while I yielded, to these influences, a gentle incredulity possesses you, and if you consent that such a thing as earnest and energetic life may be, you cannot help wondering why it need be. The charm of the place sweetens your temper, but corrupts you; and I found it a sad condition of my perception of the beauty of Venice and friendship with it, that I came in some unconscious way to regard her fate as my own; and when I began to write the sketches which go to form this book, it was as hard to speak of any ugliness in her, or of the doom written against her in the hieroglyphic seams and fissures of her crumbling masonry, as if the fault and penalty were mine. I do not, therefore, so greatly blame the writers who have committed so many sins of omission concerning her, and made her all light, color, canals, and palaces. One's conscience, more or less uncomfortably vigilant elsewhere, drowses here, and it is difficult to remember that fact is more virtuous than fiction. In other years, when

there was life in the city, and this sad ebb of prosperity was full tide in her canals, there might have been some incentive to keep one's thoughts and words from lapsing into habits of luxurious dishonesty, some reason for telling the whole hard truth of things, some policy to serve, some end to gain. But now, what matter?

III. THE WINTER IN VENICE

THE INCLEMENCY OF A MILD CLIMATE — STOVES INTRODUCED BY THE GERMANS AT VENICE — STONE FLOORS AND STONE-COLD ROOMS — THE NATIONAL SCALDINO AND ITS USES — A WHOLE CITY THAT SNIFFS — THE SHARPER COLD OF THE PALLADIAN CHURCHES — ICE IN THE CANALS AND LAGOONS — THE FAMOUS YEAR OF ICE — SNOW IN THE VENETIAN STREETS — A SNOWFALL ON ST. MARK'S.

IT was winter, as I said, when I first came to Venice, and my experiences of the city were not all purely æsthetic. There was, indeed, an every-day roughness and discomfort in the weather, which travelers passing their first winter in Italy find it hard to reconcile with the habitual ideas of the season's clemency in the South. But winter is apt to be very severe in mild climates; people do not acknowledge it, making a wretched pretense that it is summer, only a little out of humor.

I

THE Germans have introduced stoves at Venice, but they are not in much favor with the Italians, who think their heat unwholesome, and endure a degree of cold, in their wish to dispense with fire, which we of the winter-lands know nothing of in our houses. They pay for their absurd prejudice with terrible chilblains; and their hands, which suffer equally with their feet, are, in

the case of those most exposed to the cold, objects pitiable and revolting to behold when the itching and the effort to allay it have turned them into masses of sores. It is not a pleasant thing to speak of; and the constant sight of the affliction among people who bring you bread, cut you cheese, and weigh you out sugar, by no means reconciles the Northern stomach to its prevalence. I have observed that priests, and those who have much to do in the frigid churches, are the worst sufferers in this way; and I think no one can help noting in the harsh, raw winter-complexion (for in summer the tone is quite different) of the women of all classes, the protest of systems cruelly starved of the warmth which health demands.

The houses are, naturally enough in this climate where there are eight months of summer in the year, all built with a view to coolness in summer, and the rooms which are not upon the ground-floor are very large, lofty, and cold. In the palaces, there are two suites of apartments, the smaller and cosier suite upon the first floor for the winter, and the grander and airier chambers and saloons above, for defense against the insidious heats of the sirocco. But, for the most part, people must occupy the same room summer and winter, the sole change being in the strip of carpet laid meagrely before the sofa during the winter. In the comparatively few houses where carpets are not the exception, they are always removed during the summer — for the triple purpose of sparing them some months' wear, banishing fleas and other domestic insects, and showing off the

beauty of the oiled and shining pavement, which in the meanest houses is tasteful, and in many of the better sort is often inwrought with figures and designs of mosaic. All the floors in Venice are of stone, and whether of marble flags, or of that species of composition formed of dark cement, with fragments of colored marble imbedded and smoothed and polished to the most glassy and even surface, and the general effect and complexion of petrified plum-pudding, all the floors are death-cold in winter. People sit with their feet upon cushions, and their bodies muffled in furs and wadded gowns. When one goes out into the sun, one often finds an overcoat too heavy; but it never gives warmth enough in the house, where the Venetian sometimes wears it. Indeed, the sun is recognized by Venetians as the only legitimate source of heat, and they sell his favor at fabulous prices to such foreigners as take the lodgings into which he shines.

It is those who remain indoors, therefore, who are exposed to the utmost rigor of the winter, and people spend as much of their time as possible in the open air. The Riva degli Schiavoni catches the warm afternoon sun in its whole extent, and is then thronged with promenaders of every class, condition, age, and sex; and whenever the sun shines in the Piazza, shivering fashion eagerly courts its favor. At night men crowd the close little cafés, where they reciprocate smoke, respiration, and animal heat, and thus temper the inclemency of the weather, and beguile the time with solemn loafing, and the perusal of dingy little journals, drinking small

cups of black coffee, and playing long games of chess, — an evening that seemed to me as torpid and lifeless as a Lap's, and intolerable when I remembered the bright, social winter evenings of a happier land and civilization.

Sometimes you find a heated stove — that is to say, one in which there has been a fire during the day — in a Venetian house; but the stove seems usually to be placed in the room for ornament, or else to be engaged only in diffusing a very acrid smoke, as if the Venetians preferred to take their warmth by inhalation. The stove itself is a curious structure, and built commonly of bricks and plastering, whitewashed and painted outside. It is a great consumer of fuel, and radiates but little heat. By dint of constant wooding I contrived to warm mine; but my Italian friends always avoided its vicinity when they came to see me, and most amusingly regarded my determination to be comfortable as part of the eccentricity inseparable from the Anglo-Saxon character.

I dare say they would not trifle with winter thus, if they knew him in his northern moods. But the only voluntary concession they make to his severity is the *scaldino*, and this is made chiefly by the yielding sex, who are denied the warmth of the cafés. The use of the scaldino is known to all ranks, but it is the women of the poorer orders who are most addicted to it. The scaldino is a small pot of glazed earthenware, having an earthen bale: and with this handle passed over the arm, and the pot full of bristling charcoal, the Venezi-ana's defense against cold is complete. She carries her

scaldino with her in the house from room to room, and takes it with her into the street; and it has often been my fortune in the churches to divide my admiration between the painting over the altar and the poor old crone kneeling before it, who, while she sniffed and whispered a gelid prayer, and warmed her heart with religion, baked her dirty palms in the carbonic fumes of the scaldino. In one of the public bath-houses in Venice there are four prints upon the walls, intended to convey to the minds of the bathers a poetical idea of the four seasons. There is nothing remarkable in the symbolization of Spring, Summer, and Autumn; but Winter is nationally represented by a fine lady dressed in furred robes, with her feet upon a cushioned foot-stool, and a scaldino in her lap! When we talk of being invaded in the north, we poetize the idea of defense by the figure of defending our hearthstones. Alas! *could* we fight for our sacred scaldini?

Happy are the men who bake chestnuts, and sell hot pumpkins and pears, for they can unite pleasure and profit. There are some degrees of poverty below the standard of the scaldino, and the beggars and the wretcheder poor keep themselves warm, I think, by sultry recollections of summer, as Don Quixote proposed to subsist upon savory remembrances during one of his periods of fast. One mendicant whom I know, and who always sits upon the steps of a certain bridge, succeeds, I believe, as the season advances, in heating the marble beneath him by firm and unswerving adhesion, and establishes a reciprocity of warmth with it. I

have no reason to suppose that he ever deserts his seat for a moment during the whole winter; and indeed, it would be a vicious waste of comfort to do so.

In the winter, the whole city *sniffs*, and I sometimes wildly wondered if Desdemona, in *her* time, sniffed, and I found little comfort in the reflection that Shylock must have had a cold in his head. There is comparative warmth in the broad squares before the churches, but the narrow streets are bitter thorough-draughts, and influenza lies in wait for its prey in all those picturesque, alluring little courts of which I have spoken.

II

IT is, however, in the churches, whose cool twilight and airy height one finds so grateful in summer, that the sharpest malice of the winter is felt; and having visited a score of them soon after my arrival, I deferred the remaining seventy-five or eighty, together with the gallery of the Academy, until advancing spring should, in some degree, have mitigated the severity of their temperature. As far as my imagination affected me, I thought the Gothic churches much more tolerable than the temples of classic art. The empty bareness of these, with their huge marbles, and their soulless splendors of theatrical sculpture, their frescoed roofs and broken arches, was insufferable. The arid grace of Palladio's architecture was especially grievous to the sense in cold weather; and I warn the traveler who goes to see the lovely Madonnas of Bellini, to beware how he trusts himself in winter to the gusty, arctic magnificence of

the church of the Redentore. But by all means the coldest church in the city is that of the Jesuits, which those who have seen it will remember for its famous marble drapery. This base mechanical surprise (for it is a trick, and not art) is effected by inlaying the white marble of columns and pulpits and altars with a certain pattern of verd-antique. The workmanship is marvelously skillful, and the material costly, but it only gives the church the effect of being draped in damask linen; and even where the marble is carven in vast and heavy folds over a pulpit to simulate a curtain, or wrought in figures on the steps of the high altar to represent a carpet, it has a coldness, a harshness indescribably tableclothy. I think all this has tended to chill the soul of the sacristan, who is the feeblest and thinnest sacristan conceivable, with a frost of white hair on his temples quite incapable of thawing. In this dreary sanctuary is one of Titian's great paintings, The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence, to which (though it is so cunningly disposed as to light that no one ever yet saw the whole picture at once) you turn involuntarily, envious of the Saint toasting so comfortably on his gridiron amid all that frigidity.

III

THE Venetians pretend that many of the late winters have been much severer than those of former years, but I think this pretense has less support in fact than in the desire of mankind everywhere to claim that such weather as the present, whatever it happens to be, was never seen before. The winter climate of north Italy is

really very harsh, and though the season is not so severe in Venice as in Milan, or even Florence, it is still so sharp as to make foreigners regret the generous fires and warmly-built houses of the north. There was snow but once during my first Venetian winter, 1861–62; the second there was none at all; but the third, which was last winter, it fell repeatedly to considerable depth, and lay unmelted for many weeks in the shade. The lagoons were frozen for miles in every direction; and under our windows on the Grand Canal sheets of ice went up and down with the rising and the falling tide for nearly a month. The visible misery throughout the fireless city was great; and it was a problem I never could solve, whether people indoors were greater sufferers from the cold than those who weathered the cruel winds sweeping the squares and the canals, and whistling through the streets of stone and brine. The boys had an unwonted season of sliding on the frozen lagoons, though a good deal persecuted by the police, who must have looked upon such a tremendous innovation as little better than revolution; and it was said that there were card-parties on the ice; but the only creatures which seemed really to enjoy the weather were the sea-gulls. These birds, which flock into the city in vast numbers at the first approach of cold, and, sailing up and down the canals between the palaces, bring to the dwellers in the city a full sense of mid-ocean forlornness and desolation, now rioted on the savage winds, with harsh cries, and danced upon the waves of the bitter brine, with shrieks of an eldritch and unearthly joy.

A place so much given to talk as Venice did not fail to produce many memorable incidents of the cold; but the most singular adventure was that of the old man employed at the Armenian Convent to bring milk from the island of San Lazaro to the city. One night, shortly after the coldest weather set in, he lost his oar as he was returning to the island. The wind, which is particularly furious in that part of the lagoon, blew his boat away into the dark, and the good brothers at the convent naturally gave up their milkman for lost. The winds and waters drifted him eight miles from the city into the northern lagoon, and there lodged his boat in the marshes, where it froze fast in the stiffening mud. He had nothing to eat or drink in his boat, where he remained five days and nights, exposed to the inclemency of cold many degrees below friendship in severity. He made continual signs of distress, but no boat came near enough to discover him. At last, when the whole marsh was frozen solid, he was taken off by some fishermen, and carried to the convent, where he remains in perfectly recovered health, and where no doubt he will be preserved alive many years in an atmosphere which renders dying at San Lazaro a matter of no small difficulty. During the whole time of his imprisonment, he sustained life against hunger and cold by smoking. I suppose no one will be surprised to learn that he was rescued by the fishermen through the miraculous interposition of the Madonna — as any one might have seen by the votive picture hung up at her shrine on a bridge of the Riva degli Schiavoni, wherein the Virgin was

represented breaking through the clouds in one corner of the sky, and unmistakably directing the operations of the fishermen.

It is said that no such winter as that of 1863–64 has been known in Venice since the famous *Anno del Ghiaccio* (Year of the Ice), which fell about the beginning of the eighteenth century. This year is celebrated in the local literature; the play which commemorates it always draws full houses at the people's theatre, Malibran; and the often-copied picture, by a painter of the time, representing Lustrissime and Lustrissimi in hoops and bag-wigs on the ice, never fails to block up the street before the shop-window in which it is exposed. The King of Denmark was then the guest of the Republic, and as the unprecedented cold defeated all the plans arranged for his diversion, the pleasure-loving government turned the cold itself to account, and made the ice occasion of novel brilliancy in its festivities. The duties on commerce between the city and the mainland were suspended for as long time as the lagoon should remain frozen, and the ice became a scene of the liveliest traffic, and was everywhere covered with sledges, bringing the produce of the country to the capital, and carrying away its stuffs in return. The Venetians of every class amused themselves in visiting this free mart, and the more delicate sex pressed eagerly forward to traverse with their feet a space hitherto passable only in gondolas.[1] The lagoon remained frozen, and these pleasures lasted eighteen days, a period of cold unequaled till last

[1] *Origine delle Feste Veneziane*, di Giustina Renier-Michiel.

winter. A popular song now declares that the present generation has known a winter quite as marvelous as that of the Year of the Ice, and celebrates the wonder of walking on the water: —

Che bell' affar!
Che patetico affar!
Che immenso affar!
Sora l'acqua camminar!

But, after all, the disagreeable winter, which hardly commences before Christmas, and which ends about the middle of March, is but a small part of the glorious Venetian year; and even this ungracious season has a loveliness, at times, which it can have nowhere but in Venice. What summer-delight of other lands could match the beauty of the first Venetian snow-fall which I saw? It had snowed overnight, and in the morning when I woke it was still snowing. The flakes fell softly and vertically through the motionless air, and all the senses were full of languor and repose. It was rapture to lie still, and after a faint glimpse of the golden-winged angel on the bell-tower of St. Mark's, to give indolent eyes solely to the contemplation of the roof opposite, where the snow lay half an inch deep upon the brown tiles. The little scene — a few square yards of roof, a chimney-pot and a dormer window — was all that the most covetous spirit could demand; and I lazily lorded it over that domain of pleasure, while the lingering mists of a dream of new-world events blent themselves with the luxurious humor of the moment and the calm of the snow-fall, and made my reverie one of the perfectest

things in the world. When I was lost the deepest in it, I was inexpressibly touched and gratified by the appearance of a black cat at the dormer window. In Venice, roofs commanding pleasant exposures seem to be chiefly devoted to the cultivation of this animal, and there are many cats in Venice. My black cat looked wonderingly upon the snow for a moment, and then ran across the roof. Nothing could have been better. Any creature less silent, or in point of movement less soothing to the eye, than a cat, would have been torture of the spirit. As it was, this little piece of action contented me so well that I left everything else out of my reverie, and could only think how deliciously the cat harmonized with the snow-covered tiles, the chimney-pot, and the dormer window. I began to long for her reappearance, but when she did come forth and repeat her manœuvre, I ceased to have the slightest interest in the matter, and experienced only the disgust of satiety. I had felt *ennui* — nothing remained but to get up and change my relations with the world.

IV

In Venetian streets they give the fallen snow no rest. It is at once shoveled into the canals by hundreds of half-naked *facchini*, — people of leisure in Italian cities who relieve long seasons of repose by occasionally acting as messengers, porters, and day-laborers, — and now in St. Mark's Place the music of innumerable shovels smote upon my ear, and I saw the shivering legion of poverty as it engaged the elements in a struggle for the

possession of the Piazza. But the snow continued to fall, and through the twilight of the descending flakes all this toil and encounter looked like that weary kind of effort in dreams, when the most determined industry seems only to renew the task. The lofty crest of the bell-tower was hidden in the folds of falling snow, and I could no longer see the golden angel upon its summit. But looked at across the Piazza, the beautiful outline of St. Mark's Church was perfectly penciled in the air, and the shifting threads of the snow-fall were woven into a spell of novel enchantment around a structure that always seemed to me too exquisite in its fantastic loveliness to be anything but the creation of magic. The tender snow had compassionated the beautiful edifice for the wrongs of time, and so hid the stains and ugliness of decay that it looked as if just from the hand of the builder,—or, better said, just from the brain of the architect. There was wonderful freshness in the colors of the mosaics in the great arches of the façade, and all that gracious harmony into which the temple rises, of marble scrolls and leafy exuberance airily supporting the statues of the saints, was a hundred times etherealized by the purity and whiteness of the drifting flakes. The snow lay lightly on the golden globes that tremble like peacock crests above the vast domes, and plumed them with softest white; it robed the saints in ermine; and it danced over all its work, as if exulting in its beauty — beauty which filled me with a subtle, selfish yearning to keep such evanescent loveliness for the little-while-longer of my whole life, and with despair to

think that even the poor lifeless shadow of it could never be fairly reflected in picture or poem.

Through the wavering snow-fall, the Saint Theodore upon one of the granite pillars of the Piazzetta did not show so grim as his wont is, and the winged lion on the other might have been a winged lamb, so mild and gentle he looked by the tender light of the storm.[1] The towers of the island churches loomed faint and far away in the dimness; the sailors in the rigging of the ships that lay in the Basin wrought like phantoms among the shrouds; the gondolas stole in and out of the opaque distance more noiselessly and dreamily than ever; and a silence, almost palpable, lay upon the mutest city in the world.

[1] St. Theodore was the first patron of Venice, but he was deposed and St. Mark adopted, when the bones of St. Mark were brought from Alexandria. The Venetians seem to have felt some compunctions for this desertion of an early friend, and they have given St. Theodore a place on one of the granite pillars, while the other is surmounted by the Lion, representing St. Mark. *Fra Marco e Todaro* is a proverb expressing the state of perplexity which we indicate by the figure of an ass between two bundles of hay.

IV. COMINCIA FAR CALDO

THE STREETS AND CANALS — ALL ROADS LEAD TO ST. MARK'S — ONE PIAZZA AND MANY CAMPOS — THE BEAUTY AND GLORY OF PIAZZA SAN MARCO — THE FREQUENTERS OF THE CAFÉS IN THE PIAZZA — POLITICS IN BEARDS — HOW THE SPRING COMES IN VENICE — CAMPO SAN BARTOLOMEO AND ITS LIFE — THE SPRING MELTS INTO SUMMER.

THE Place of St. Mark is the heart of Venice, and from this beats her life in every direction, through an intricate system of streets and canals that bring it back again to the same centre. So, if the slightest uneasiness had attended the frequency with which I lost my way in the city at first, there would always have been this comfort: that the place was very small in actual extent, and that if I continued walking I must reach the Piazza sooner or later. There is a crowd constantly tending to and from it, and you have only to take this tide, and be drifted to St. Mark's, or to the Rialto Bridge, whence the Piazza is directly accessible.

I

OF all the open spaces in the city, that before the Church of St. Mark alone bears the name of Piazza, and the rest are called merely *campi*, or fields. But if the company of the noblest architecture can give honor, the Piazza San Marco merits its distinction, not in Venice

round three of its sides are filled with loungers and shoppers, even when there is music by the Austrian bands; for, as we have seen, the purest patriot may then walk under the Procuratie, without stain to the principles which would be blackened if he set foot in the Piazza. The absence of dust and noisy hoofs and wheels tempts social life out of doors in Venice more than in any other Italian city, though the tendency to this sort of expansion is common throughout Italy. Beginning with the warm days of early May, and continuing till the *villeggiatura* (the period spent at the country-seat) interrupts it late in September, all Venice goes by a single impulse of *dolce far niente*, and sits gossiping at the doors of the cafés on the Riva degli Schiavoni, in the Piazza San Marco, and in the different squares in every part of the city. But of course, the most brilliant scene of this kind is in St. Mark's Place, which has a night-time glory from the light of uncounted lamps upon its architectural groups. The superb Imperial Palace, the sculptured, arcaded, and pillared Procuratie, the Byzantine magic and splendor of the church — will it all be there when you come again to-morrow night? The unfathomable heaven above seems part of the place, for it seems never so tenderly blue over any other spot of earth. And when the sky is blurred with clouds, shall not the Piazza vanish with the azure? — People, I say, come to drink coffee, and eat ices here in the summer evenings, and then, what with the promenades in the arcades and in the Piazza, the music, the sound of feet, and the hum of voices, unbroken by the ruder uproar

of cities where there are horses and wheels, the effect is that of a large evening party, and in this aspect the Piazza is like a vast drawing-room.

I liked well to see that strange life, which even the stout, dead-in-earnest little Austrian musicians, piping in the centre of the Piazza, could not altogether substantialize, and which constantly took immateriality from the loveliness of its environment. In the winter the scene was the most purely Venetian, and in my first winter, when I had abandoned all thought of churches till spring, I settled down to steady habits of idleness and coffee, and contemplated the life of the Piazza.

III

THE loungers at Florian's were the most interesting, because they were the most various. People of all shades of politics met in the dainty little saloons, though there were shades of division even there, and they did not mingle. The Italians carefully assorted themselves in a room furnished with green velvet, and the Austrians and the Austriacanti frequented a red-velvet room. They were curious to look at, those tranquil, indolent Italian loafers, and I had an uncommon relish for them. They seldom spoke together, and when they did speak, they burst from silence into tumultuous controversy, and then lapsed again into perfect silence. The elder among them sat with their hands carefully folded on the heads of their sticks, gazing upon the ground, or buried themselves in the perusal of the French journals. The younger stood a good deal about the doorways, and

now and then passed a gentle, gentle jest with the waiters in black coats and white cravats, who hurried to and fro with the orders, and called them out in strident voices to the accountant at his little table; or sometimes one of these young idlers made a journey to the room devoted to ladies and forbidden to smokers, looked long and deliberately in upon its loveliness, and then returned to the bosom of his taciturn companions. By chance I found them playing chess, but very rarely. They were all well-dressed, handsome men, with beards carefully cut, brilliant hats and boots, and conspicuously clean linen. I used to wonder who they were, to what order of society they belonged, and whether they, like my unworthy self, had never anything else but lounging at Florian's to do; but I really know none of these things to this day. Some men in Venice spend their noble, useful lives in this way, and it was the proud reply of a Venetian father, when asked of what profession his son was, "*È in Piazza!*" That was, he bore a cane, wore light gloves, and stared from Florian's windows at the ladies who went by.

At the Caffè Quadri, immediately across the Piazza, all was a glitter of uniforms, and the idling was carried on with a great noise of conversation in Austrian-German. The officers were very comely, intelligent-looking people, with the most good-natured faces. They came and went restlessly, sitting down and knocking their steel scabbards against the tables, or rising and straddling off with their long swords kicking against their legs. They are the most stylish soldiers in the world,

and one has no notion how ill they can dress when left to themselves, till one sees them in civil dress.

Further up toward the Fabbrica Nuova (as the Imperial Palace is called), is the Caffè Specchi, frequented only by young Italians, of an order less wealthy than those who go to Florian's. Across from this café is that of the Emperor of Austria, resorted to chiefly by non-commissioned officers, and civilian officials of lower grade. You know the civilians, at a glance, by the beard, which in Venice is an index to every man's politics: no Austriacante wears the imperial, no Italianissimo shaves it. Next is the Caffè Suttil, rather Austrian, and frequented by Italian *codini*, or old fogies, in politics: gray old fellows, who caress their sticks with more constant zeal than even the elders at Florian's. Quite at the other end of the Procuratie Nuove is the Café of the Greeks, a nation which I have commonly seen represented there by two or three Albanians with an Albanian boy, who, being dressed exactly like his father, curiously impressed me, as if he were the young of some Oriental animal — say a boy-elephant, or infant camel.

I hope that the reader adds to this sketch, even in the winter time, occasional tourists under the Procuratie at the cafés, and in the shops, where the shopkeepers are devouring them with the keenness of an appetite unsated by the hordes of summer visitors. I hope that the reader also groups me fishermen, gondoliers, beggars, and loutish boys about the base of St. Mark's, and at the feet of the three flagstaffs before the church; that he passes me a slatternly woman and a frowzy girl

or two through the Piazza occasionally; and that he calls down the flocks of pigeons hovering near, half ashamed to show themselves, as being aware that they are a great humbug, and unrightfully in the guide-books.

While I sit at Florian's, sharing and studying the idleness about me, the brief winter passes, and the spring of the south — so unlike the ardent season of the north, where it burns summer almost before the snows are dried upon the fields — descends upon the city and the sea. But except in the little gardens of the palaces, and where here and there a fig tree lifts its head to peer over a lofty stone wall, the spring finds no response of swelling bud and unfolding leaf, and it is human nature alone which welcomes it. Perhaps it is for this reason that the welcome is more visible in Venice than elsewhere, and that here, where the effect of the season is narrowed and limited to men's hearts, the joy it brings is all the keener and deeper. It is certain at least that the rapture is more demonstrative. The city, always voiceful, seems to burst into song with the advent of these golden days and silver nights. Bands of young men go singing through the moonlit streets, and the Grand Canal re-echoes the music of the parties of young girls as they drift along in the scarcely moving boats, and sing the glories of the lagoons and the loves of fishermen and gondoliers. In the Public Gardens they walk and sing; and wandering minstrels come forth before the cafés, and it is hard to get beyond the tinkling of guitars and the scraping of fiddles. It is as if the city had put off its

winter humor with its winter dress; and as Venice in winter is the dreariest and gloomiest place in the world, so in spring it is the fullest of joy and light. There is a pleasant bustle in the streets, a ceaseless clatter of feet over the stones of the squares, and a constant movement of boats upon the canals.

We say, in a cheap and careless way, that the southern peoples have no *homes*. But this is true only in a restricted sense, for the Italian, and the Venetian especially, makes the whole city his home in pleasant weather. No one remains under a roof who can help it; and now, as I said before, the fascinating out-door life begins. All day long the people sit and drink coffee and eat ices and gossip together before the cafés, and the soft midnight sees the same constant idlers in their places. The promenade is at every season the favorite Italian amusement; it has its rigidly fixed hours, and its limits are also fixed: but now, in spring, even the promenade is a little lawless, and the crowds upon the Riva sometimes walk as far as the Public Gardens, and throng the wider avenues and the Piazza; while young Venice comes to take the sun at St. Mark's in the arms of its high-breasted nurses — mighty peasant women, who, in their bright costumes, their dangling chains, and head-dresses of gold and silver baubles, stride through the Piazza with the high, free-stepping movement of blood-horses, and look like the women of some elder race of barbaric vigor and splendor, which, but for them, had passed away from our puny, dull-clad times.

"È la stagion che ognuno s' innamora;"

and now young girls steal to their balconies, and linger there for hours, subtly conscious of the young men sauntering to and fro, and looking up at them from beneath. Now, in the shady little courts, the Venetian housewives, who must perforce remain indoors, put out their heads and gossip from window to window; while the pretty water-carriers, filling their buckets from the wells below, chatter and laugh at their work. Every street down which you look is likewise vocal with gossip; and if the picturesque projection of balconies, shutters, and chimneys, of which the vista is full, hides the heads of the gossipers, be sure there is a face looking out of every window for all that, and the social, expansive presence of the season is felt there.

The poor, whose sole luxury the summer is, lavish the spring upon themselves unsparingly. They come forth from their dark dens in crumbling palaces and damp basements, and live in the sunlight and the welcome air. They work, they eat, they sleep out of doors. Mothers of families sit at their thresholds and spin, or walk volubly up and down with other slatternly matrons, armed with spindle and distaff; while their raven-haired daughters, lounging near the threshold, chase the covert insects that haunt the tangles of the children's locks. Within doors shines the bare bald head of the grandmother, who never ceases talking for an instant.

Before the winter passed, I had changed my habitation from rooms near the Piazza to quarters in the Campo San Bartolomeo, through which the busiest street in Venice passes from St. Mark's to the Rialto Bridge. It is one

of the smallest squares in the city, and the very noisiest, and here the spring came with intolerable uproar. I had taken my rooms early in March, when the tumult under my windows amounted only to a cheerful stir, and made company for me; but when the winter broke, and the windows were opened, I found that I had too much society.

Each campo in Venice is a little city, self-contained and independent. Each has its church, of which it was in the earliest times the burial-ground; and each within its limits compasses a café, more or less brilliant, a family grocery, an apothecary's shop, a mercer's, a draper's, an ironsmith's, a shoemaker's, a green-grocer's, a fruiterer's shop, — yes, there is also a second-hand merchant's shop, where you buy and sell every kind of worn-out thing at the lowest rates. Of course there is a coppersmith's and a watchmaker's, and pretty certainly a wood-carver's and gilder's; without a barber's shop no campo could preserve its integrity or inform itself of the social and political news of the day. In addition to all these elements of bustle and disturbance, San Bartolomeo swarmed with the traffic and rang with the bargains of the Rialto market.

Here the small dealer makes up in boastful clamor for the absence of quantity and assortment in his wares; and it often happens that an almost imperceptible boy, with a card of shirt-buttons and a paper of hair-pins, is much worse than the Anvil Chorus with real anvils. Fishermen, with baskets of fish upon their heads; peddlers, with trays of household wares; louts who dragged baskets of

lemons and oranges back and forth by long cords; men who sold water by the glass; charlatans who advertised cement for mending broken dishes, and drops for the cure of toothache; jugglers who spread their carpets and arranged their temples of magic upon the ground; organists who ground their organs; and poets of the people who brought out new songs, and sang and sold them to the crowd — these were the children of confusion, whom the pleasant sun and friendly air woke to frantic and interminable uproar in San Bartolomeo.

Yet there was a charm about it all at first, and I spent much time in the study of the vociferous life under my windows, trying to make out the meaning of the different cries, and to trace them back to their sources. There was one which puzzled me for a long time, — a sharp, pealing cry that ended in a wail of angry despair, and, rising high above the other sounds, impressed the spirit like the cry of that bird in the tropic forests which the terrified Spaniards called the *alma perdida*. After many days of listening and trembling, I found that it proceeded from a wretched, sunburnt girl, who carried about some dozens of knotty pears, and whose hair hung disheveled round her eyes, bloodshot with the strain of her incessant shrieks.

In San Bartolomeo, as in other squares, the buildings are palaces above and shops below. The ground-floor is devoted to the small commerce of various kinds already mentioned; the first story above is occupied by tradesmen's families; and on the third or fourth floor is the *appartamento signorile*. From the balconies of these stories

hung the cages of innumerable finches, canaries, blackbirds, and savage parrots, which sang and screamed with delight in the noise that rose from the crowd. The human life, therefore, which the spring drew to the casements was perceptible only in dumb show. One of the palaces opposite was used as a hotel, and faces continually appeared at the windows. By all odds the most interesting figure there was that of a stout peasant serving-girl, dressed in a white knitted jacket, a crimson neckerchief, and a bright-colored gown, and wearing long dangling earrings of yellowest gold. For hours this idle maiden balanced herself half over the balcony rail in perusal of the people under her, and I suspect made love at that distance, and in that constrained position, to some one in the crowd. On another balcony, a lady sat and knitted with crimson yarn; and at the window of still another house, a damsel now looked out upon the square, and now gave a glance into the room, in the evident direction of a mirror. Venetian neighbors have the amiable custom of studying one another's features through opera-glasses; but I could not persuade myself to use this means of learning the mirror's response to the damsel's constant "Fair or not?" being a believer in every woman's right to look well a little way off. I shunned whatever trifling temptation there was in the case, and turned again to the campo beneath—to the placid dandies about the door of the café; to the tide of passers from the Merceria; the smooth-shaven Venetians of other days, and the bearded Venetians of these; the dark-eyed, white-faced Venetian girls, hooped in cruel disproportion to the narrow

streets, but richly clad, and moving with southern grace; the files of heavily burdened soldiers; the little policemen loitering lazily about with their swords at their sides, in their spotless Austrian uniforms.

IV

AS the spring advances in Venice, and the heat increases, the expansive delight with which the city hails its coming passes into a tranquiller humor in places, as if the joy of the beautiful season had sunk too deeply into their heart for utterance. I, too, felt this longing for quiet, and as San Bartolomeo continued untouched by it, and all day roared and thundered under my windows, and all night long gave itself up to sleepless youths who there melodiously bayed the moon in chorus, I was obliged to abandon San Bartolomeo, and seek calmer quarters, where I might enjoy the last luxurious sensations of the spring-time in peace.

Now, when the city lapses into this tranquiller humor, the promenades cease. The facchino gives his leisure to sleeping in the sun; and in the mellow afternoons there is scarcely a space of six feet square on the Riva degli Schiavoni which does not bear its brown-cloaked peasant, basking face-downward in the warmth. The broad steps of the bridges are by right the berths of the beggars; the sailors and fishermen slumber in their boats; and the gondoliers, if they do not sleep, are yet placated by the season, and forbear to quarrel, and only break into brief clamors at the sight of inaccessible English passing near them under the guard of *valets de place.*

I

I FANCY that to find good Italian opera you must seek it somewhere out of Italy,—at London, or Paris, or New York,—though possibly it might be chanced upon at La Scala in Milan, or San Carlo in Naples. The cause of the decay of the musical art in Venice must be looked for among the events which seem to have doomed her to decay in everything; certainly it cannot be discerned in any indifference of the people to music. The *dimostrazione* keeps the better class of citizens from the opera, but the passion for it still exists in every order. You hear the airs of opera sung as commonly upon the streets in Venice as our own colored melodies at home; and the street-boy when he sings has an inborn sense of music and a power of execution which put to shame the tenuity of sound that sometimes issues from the northern mouth —

"That frozen, passive, palsied breathing-hole."

In the days of the Fenice there was a school for the ballet at that theatre, but this is now an imported element of the opera in Venice. No novices appear on her stages, and the musical conservatories of the place, which were once so famous, have long ceased to exist. The musical theatre was very popular in Venice as early as the middle of the seventeenth century; and the care of the state for the drama existed from the first. The government, which always piously forbade the representation of Mysteries, and, as the theatre advanced,

even prohibited plays containing characters from the Old or New Testament, began about the close of the century to protect and encourage the instruction of music in the different foundling hospitals and public refuges in the city. The young girls in these institutions were taught to play on instruments, and to sing, at first for the alleviation of their own dull and solitary life, and afterward for the delight of the public. In the merry days that passed just before the fall of the Republic, the Latin oratorios which they performed in the churches attached to the hospitals were among the most fashionable diversions in Venice. The singers were taught by the best masters of the time; and at the close of the last century, the conservatories of the Incurables, the Foundlings, and the Mendicants were famous throughout Europe for their dramatic concerts, and noted for those pupils who found the transition from oratorio to opera natural and easy.

II

WITH increasing knowledge of the language, I learned to enjoy best the unmusical theatre, and went oftener to the comedy than the opera. It is hardly by any chance that the Italians play ill, and I have seen excellent acting at the Venetian theatres, both in the modern Italian comedy, which is very rich and good, and in the elder plays of Goldoni, — compositions deliciously racy when seen in Venice, where alone their admirable fidelity of drawing and of coloring can be perfectly appreciated. The best comedy is usually given to the educated

classes at the pretty Teatro Apollo, while a bloodier and louder drama is offered to the populace at Teatro Malibran, where on a Sunday night you may see the plebeian life of the city in one of its most entertaining and characteristic phases. The sparings of the whole week which have not been laid out for chances in the lottery, are spent for this evening's amusement; and in the vast pit you see, besides the families of comfortable artisans who can evidently afford it, a multitude of the ragged poor, whose presence, even at the low rate of eight or ten soldi apiece (the soldo is the hundredth part of the Austrian florin, which is worth about forty-nine cents of American money), it is hard to account for. It is very peremptory, this audience, in its likes and dislikes, and applauds and hisses with great vehemence. It likes best the sanguinary local drama; it cheers and cheers again every allusion to Venice; and when the curtain rises on some well-known Venetian scene, it has out the scene-painter by name three times — which is all the police permits. The auditors wear their hats in the pit, but deny that privilege to the people in the boxes, and raise stormy and wrathful cries of *Cappello!* till they uncover. Between acts, the people indulge in excesses of water flavored with anise, and even go to the extent of candied nuts and fruits, which are hawked about the theatre, and sold for two soldi the stick, with the tooth-pick on which they are spitted thrown into the bargain.

The Malibran Theatre is well attended on Sunday night, but the one entertainment which never fails of

drawing and delighting full houses is the theatre of the puppets, or the Marionettes, and thither I like best to go. The Marionettes prevail with me, for I find in the performances of these puppets no new condition demanded of the spectator, but rather a frank admission of unreality that makes every shadow of verisimilitude delightful, and gives a fresh relish to the immemorial effects and traditionary tricks of the stage.

The little theatre of the puppets is at the corner of a narrow street opening from the Calle del Ridotto, and is of tiny dimensions and the simplest appointments. There are no boxes, and you pay ten soldi to go into the pit, where you are much more comfortable than the aristocrats who have paid fifteen for places in the dress-circle above. The stage is very small, and the scenery a kind of coarse miniature painting. But it is very complete, and everything is contrived to give relief to the puppets and to produce an illusion of magnitude in their figures. They are very artlessly introduced, and are manœuvred, according to the exigencies of the scene, by means of cords running from their heads, arms, and legs to the top of the stage. To the management of the cords they owe the vehemence of their passions and the grace of their oratory, not to mention a certain gliding locomotion, altogether spectral.

The drama of the Marionettes is of a more elevated and ambitious tone than that of the Burattini, which exhibit their vulgar loves and coarse assassinations in Punch-and-Judy shows on the Riva and in the larger squares; but the standard characters are nearly the

same with both, and are all descended from the *commedia dell' arte* which flourished on the Italian stage before the time of Goldoni. I am very far from disparaging the Burattini, which have great and peculiar merits, not the least of which is the art of drawing the most delighted, dirty, and picturesque audiences. Like most of the Marionettes, they converse vicariously in the Venetian dialect, and have such a rapidity of utterance that it is difficult to follow them. I only remember to have made out one of their comedies,—a play in which an ingenious lover procured his rich and successful rival to be arrested for lunacy, and married the disputed young person while the other was raging in the mad-house. This play is performed to enthusiastic audiences; but for the most part the favorite drama of the Burattini appears to be a sardonic farce, in which the chief character—a puppet ten inches high, with a fixed and staring expression of Punch-like good-nature and wickedness—deludes other and weaker-minded puppets into trusting him, and then beats them with a club upon the back of the head until they die. The murders of this infamous creature, which are always executed in a spirit of jocose *sangfroid*, and accompanied by humorous remarks, are received with the keenest relish by the spectators; and, indeed, the action is every way worthy of applause. The dramatic spirit of the Italian race seems to communicate itself to the puppets, and they perform their parts with a fidelity to theatrical unnaturalness which is wonderful. I have witnessed death agonies on these little stages which the great American

tragedian himself (whoever he may now happen to be) could not surpass in degree of energy. The Burattini deserve the greater credit because they are agitated by the legs from below the scene, and not managed by cords from above, as at the Marionette Theatre. Their audiences, as I said, are always interesting, and comprise: first, boys ragged and dirty in inverse ratio to their size; then frail little girls, supporting immense babies; then Austrian soldiers, with long coats and short pipes; lumbering Dalmatian sailors; a transient Greek or Turk; Venetian loafers, pale-faced, statuesque, with the drapery of their cloaks thrown over their shoulders; young women, with bare heads of thick black hair; old women, all fluff and fangs; wooden-shod peasants, with hooded cloaks of coarse brown; then boys — and boys. They all enjoy the spectacle with approval, and take the drama seriously, uttering none of the gibes which sometimes attend efforts to please in our own country. Even when the hat, or other instrument of extortion, is passed round, and they give nothing, and when the manager, in an excess of fury and disappointment, calls out, "Ah! sons of dogs! I play no more to you!" and closes the theatre, they quietly and unresentfully disperse. Though, indeed, *fioi de cani* means no great reproach in Venetian parlance; and parents of the lower classes caressingly address their children in these terms; but to call one Figure of a Pig, is to wreak upon him the deadliest insult which can be put into words.

In the *commedia dell' arte*, before mentioned as the

inheritance of the Marionettes, the dramatist furnished merely the plot, and the outline of the action; the players filled in the character and dialogue. With any people less quick-witted than the Italians, this sort of comedy must have been insufferable; but it formed the delight of that people till the middle of the eighteenth century, and even after Goldoni went to Paris he furnished his Italian players with the *commedia dell' arte.* I have heard some very passable *gags* at the Marionette, but the real *commedia dell' arte* no longer exists, and its familiar and invariable characters perform written plays.

Facanapa is a modern addition to the old stock of *dramatis personae,* and he is now without doubt the popular favorite in Venice. He is, like Pantalon, a Venetian; but whereas the latter is always a merchant, Facanapa is anything that the exigency of the play demands. He is a dwarf, even among puppets, and his dress invariably consists of black knee-breeches and white stockings, a very long, full-skirted black coat, and a three-cornered hat. His individual traits are displayed in all his characters, and he is ever a coward, a boaster, and a liar, a glutton and a miser, but withal of an agreeable bonhomie that wins the heart. To tell the truth, I care little for the plays in which he has no part, and I have learned to think a certain trick of his — lifting his leg rigidly to a horizontal line, by way of emphasis, and saying, "Capisse la?" or "Sa la?" (You understand? You know?) — one of the finest things in the world.

III

IN nearly all of Goldoni's Venetian comedies, and in many which he wrote in Italian, appear the standard associates of Facanapa,—Arlecchino, il Dottore, Pantalon dei Bisognosi, and Brighella. The reader is at first puzzled by their constant recurrence, but never weary of Goldoni's witty management of them. They are the chief persons of the obsolete *commedia dell' arte*, and have their nationality and peculiarities marked by immemorial attribution. Pantalon is a Venetian merchant, rich, and commonly the indulgent father of a willful daughter or dissolute son, figuring also sometimes as a childless uncle of large fortune. The second old man is il Dottore, who is a Bolognese, and a doctor of the University. Brighella and Arlecchino are both of Bergamo. The one is a sharp and roguish servant, busy-body, and rascal; the other is dull and foolish, and always masked and dressed in motley—a gibe at the poverty of the Bergamasks, among whom, moreover, the extremes of stupidity and cunning are most usually found, according to the popular notion in Italy.

The plays of the Marionettes are written expressly for them, and are much shorter than the standard drama as it is known to us. They embrace, however, a wide range of subjects, from lofty melodrama to broad farce, as you may see by looking at the advertisements in the Venetian gazettes for any week past, where perhaps you shall find the plays performed to have been: The Ninety-nine Misfortunes of Facanapa; Arlecchino,

the Sleeping King; Facanapa as Soldier in Catalonia; the Capture of Smyrna, with Facanapa and Arlecchino Slaves in Smyrna (this play being repeated several nights); and Arlecchino and Facanapa Hunting an Ass. If you can fancy people going night after night to this puppet drama, and enjoying it with the keenest appetite, you will not only do something toward realizing to yourself the easily pleased Italian nature, but you will also suppose great excellence in the theatrical management. For my own part, I find few things in life equal to the Marionettes. I am never tired of their bewitching absurdity, their inevitable defects, their irresistible touches of verisimilitude. At their theatre I have seen the relenting parent (Pantalon) twitchingly embrace his erring son, while Arlecchino, as the large-hearted cobbler who has paid the house rent of the erring son when the prodigal was about to be cast into the street, looked on and rubbed his hands with amiable satisfaction and the conventional delight in benefaction which we all know. I have witnessed the base terrors of Facanapa at an apparition, and I have beheld the keen spiritual agonies of the Emperor Nicholas on hearing of the fall of Sebastopol. Not many passages of real life have affected me as deeply as the atrocious behavior of the brutal baronial brother-in-law, when he responds to the expostulations of his friend, the Knight of Malta, — a puppet of shaky and vacillating presence, but a soul of steel and rock: —

"Why, O baron, detain this unhappy lady in thy dungeons? Remember, she is thy brother's wife. Re-

member thine own honor. Think on the sacred name of virtue." (Wrigglingly, with a set countenance, and gesticulations toward the pit.)

To which the ferocious baron makes answer with a sneering laugh, "Honor? — I know it not! Virtue? — I detest it!" and attempting to pass the knight, in order to inflict fresh indignities upon his sister-in-law, he yields to the natural infirmities of pasteboard, and topples against him.

Facanapa, also, in his great scene of the Haunted Poet, is tremendous. You discover him in bed, too much visited by the Muse to sleep, and reading his manuscripts aloud to himself, after the manner of poets when they cannot find other listeners. He is alarmed by various ghostly noises in the house, and is often obliged to get up and examine the dark corners of the room, and to look under the bed. When at last the spectral head appears at the footboard, Facanapa vanishes, with a miserable cry, under the bedclothes, and the scene closes. Intrinsically the scene is not much, but this great actor throws into it a life, a spirit, a drollery wholly irresistible.

The ballet at the Marionettes is a triumph of choregraphic art. The *prima ballerina* has all the difficult grace and far-fetched arts of the *prima ballerina* of flesh and blood.; and when the enthusiastic audience calls her back after the scene, she is humanly delighted, and acknowledges the compliment with lifelike *empressement*. I have no doubt the *corps de ballet* have their private jealousies and bickerings, when quietly laid away in boxes, and deprived of all positive power by the removal of the cords

which agitate their arms and legs. The puppets are great in *pirouette* and *pas seul;* but I think the strictly dramatic part of such spectacular ballets as The Fall of Carthage is their strong point.

IV

THE people who witness their performances are of all ages and conditions, — I remember once seeing a Russian princess and some German countesses in the pit, — but the greater number of spectators are young men of the middle classes, pretty shop-girls, and artisans and their wives and children. The little theatre is a kind of trysting-place for lovers in humble life, and there is a great deal of amusing drama going on between the acts, in which the invariable Beppi and Nina of the Venetian populace take the place of the invariable Arlecchino and Facanapa of the stage. I one day discovered a letter at the bottom of the Canal of the Giudecca, to which watery resting-place some recreant, addressed as "Caro Antonio," had consigned it; and from this letter I came to know certainly of at least one love-affair at the Marionettes. "Caro Antonio" was humbly besought, "if his heart still felt the force of love," to meet the writer (who softly reproached him with neglect) at the Marionettes the night of date, at six o'clock; and I would not like to believe he could resist so tender a prayer, though perhaps it fell out so. I fished up through the lucent water this despairing little epistle, — it was full of womanly sweetness and bad spelling, — and dried away its briny tears on the blade of my oar. If ever I thought to

keep it, with some vague purpose of offering it to any particularly anxious-looking Nina at the Marionettes as the probable writer — its unaccountable loss spared me the delicate office. Still, however, when I go to see the puppets, it is with an interest divided between the drolleries of Facanapa, and the sad presence of expectation somewhere among the groups of dark-eyed girls there, who wear such immense hoops under such greasy dresses, who part their hair at one side, and call each other "Ciò!" Where art thou, O fickle and cruel, yet ever dear Antonio? All unconscious, I think, — gallantly posed against the wall, thy slouch hat brought forward to the point of thy long cigar, the arms of thy velvet jacket folded on thy breast, and thy earrings softly twinkling in the light.

VI. RESTAURANT DINNERS AND DINERS

PERMANENCE OF RESTAURANT LIFE IN ITALY — ITALIAN TEMPERANCE IN EATING AND DRINKING — ONE FULL MEAL A DAY — "COME EAT FOUR GRAINS OF RICE WITH ME." — CAFÉ ACQUAINTANCE — EASY CAFÉ HOSPITALITY — DRAMATIC MANNERS OF THE WAITERS — THE CLAMOR IN THE RESTAURANTS — COOK-SHOPS OF LOWER GRADES — EATING-HOUSES OF THE GONDOLIERS AND FACCHINI — HOLIDAY VIANDS.

WHEN I first came to Venice, I accepted the fate appointed to young men on the Continent: I took lodgings, and I began dining drearily at the restaurants. Worse prandial fortunes may befall one, but it is hard to conceive of the continuance of so great unhappiness elsewhere; while the restaurant life is an established and permanent thing in Italy, for every bachelor and for many forlorn families. It is not because the restaurants are very dirty — if you wipe your plate and glass carefully before using them, they need not offend you; it is not because the rooms are cold — if you sit near the great vase of smouldering embers in the centre of the room, you may suffocate in comparative comfort; it is not because the prices are great — they are really very reasonable; it is not for any very tangible fault that I object to life at the restaurants; and yet I cannot think of its hopeless

homelessness without rebellion against the whole system it implies, as something unnatural and insufferable.

I

BEFORE we come to look closely at this aspect of Italian civilization, it is better to look first at a very noticeable trait of Italian character,— temperance in eating and drinking. As to the poorer classes, one observes without great surprise how slenderly they fare, and how, with a great habit of talking of meat and drink, the verb *mangiare* remains for the most part inactive with them. But it is only just to say that this virtue of abstinence seems to be not wholly the result of necessity, for it prevails with classes which could well afford the opposite vice. Meat and drink do not form the substance of conviviality with Venetians, as with the Germans and the English, and in degree with ourselves; and I have often noticed on the Mondays-of-the-Gardens, and other social festivals of the people, how the crowd amused itself with anything — music, dancing, walking, talking — anything but the great northern pastime of gluttony. Knowing the life of the place, I make quite sure that Venetian gayety is on few occasions connected with repletion; and I am ashamed to confess that I have not always been able to repress a feeling of stupid scorn for the empty stomachs everywhere, which do not even ask to be filled, or, at least, do not insist upon it. The truth is, the North has a gloomy pride in surfeit, which unfits her children to appreciate the cheerful prudence of the South.

Venetians eat one full meal a day, which is dinner. They breakfast on a piece of bread, with coffee and milk; supper is a little cup of black coffee, or an ice, taken at a café. The coffee, however, is repeated frequently throughout the day; and in the summer-time fruit is eaten, but eaten sparingly, like everything else. As to the nature of the dinner, it of course varies somewhat according to the nature of the diner; but in most families of the middle class a dinner at home consists of a piece of boiled beef, a *minestra* (a soup thickened with vegetables, tripe, and rice), a vegetable dish of some kind, and the wine of the country. The failings of the repast among all classes lean to the side of simplicity, and the abstemious character of the Venetian finds sufficient comment in his familiar invitation to dinner: "*Venga a mangiar quattro risi con me.*" (Come eat four grains of rice with me.)

But invitations to dinner have never formed a prime element of hospitality in Venice. Goldoni notices this fact in his memoirs, and speaking of the city in the early half of the last century, he says that the number and excellence of the eating-houses in the city made invitations to dinner at private houses rare and superfluous, among the courtesies offered to strangers.

The Venetian does not, like the Spaniard, place his house at your disposition, and, having extended this splendid invitation, consider the duties of hospitality fulfilled; he does not appear to think you want to make use of his house for social purposes, preferring himself the café, and finding home and comfort there, rather

than under his own roof. "What café do you frequent? Ah! so do I. We shall meet often there." This is frequently your new acquaintance's promise of friendship. And one may even learn to like the social footing on which people meet at the café, as well as that of the dining-room or drawing-room. I could not help thinking one evening at Padua, while we sat talking with some pleasant Paduans in one of the splendid saloons of the Caffè Pedrocchi, that I should like to go there for society, if I could always find it there, much better than to private houses. There is far greater ease and freedom, more elegance and luxury, and not the slightest weight of obligation laid upon you for the gratification your friend's company has given you. One has not to be a debtor in the sum of a friend's outlay for house, servants, refreshments, and the like. Nowhere in Europe is the senseless and wasteful American custom of *treating* known; and nothing could be more especially foreign to the frugal instincts and habits of the Italians. When a party of friends at a café eat or drink, each one pays for what he takes, and pecuniarily the enjoyment of the evening is uncostly or not, according as each prefers. Of course no one sits down in such a place without calling for something; but I have frequently seen people respond to this demand of custom by ordering a glass of water with anise, at the expense of two soldi. A cup of black coffee, for five soldi, secures a chair, a table, and as many journals as you like, for as long time as you like.

I say, a stranger may learn to like the life of the café,

— that of the restaurant never; though the habit of frequenting the restaurants, to which Goldoni somewhat vaingloriously refers, seems to have grown upon the Venetians with the lapse of time. The eating-houses are almost without number, and are of every degree, from the shop of the sausage-maker, who supplies gondoliers and facchini with bowls of *sguassetto*, to the Caffè Florian. They all have names which are not strange to European ears, but which are sufficiently amusing to people who come from a land where nearly every public thing is named from some impulse of patriotism or local pride. In Venice the principal restaurants are called The Steamboat, The Savage, The Little Horse, The Black Hat, and The Pictures; and I do not know that any one of them is more uncomfortable or noisy than another, or that any one of them suffers from the fact that all are bad.

II

YOU do not get breakfast at the restaurant for the reason, before stated, of the breakfast's unsubstantiality. The dining commences about three o'clock in the afternoon, and continues till nine o'clock, most people dining at five or six. As a rule the attendance is insufficient, and no guest is served until he has made a savage clapping on the tables, or clinking on his glass or plate. Then a hard-pushed waiter appears, and calls out, dramatically, "Behold me!" takes the order, shrieks it to the cook, and returning with the dinner, cries out again, still more dramatically, "Behold it ready!" and arrays it with a

great flourish on the table. I have often dined in hotels to the music of a brass band; but I did not find that so bewildering, so destructive of the individual savor of the dishes, and so conducive to absent-minded gluttony, as I at first found the constant rush and clamor of the waiters in the Venetian restaurants. The guests are, for the most part, patient and quiet enough, eating their minestra and boiled beef in such peace as the surrounding uproar permits them, and seldom making acquaintance with each other. Perhaps the gill of the fiendish wine of the country, which they drink at their meals, is rather calculated to chill than warm the heart. But, in any case, a drearier set of my fellow-beings I have never seen, — and I conceive that their life in lodgings, at the café and the restaurant, remote from the society of women and all the higher privileges of fellowship for which men herd together, is at once the most insipid, the most selfish, and the most comfortless life in the world.

The families that share the exile of the eating-houses sometimes make together a feeble buzz of conversation, but the unfriendly spirit of the place seems soon to silence them. Undoubtedly they frequent the restaurant for economy's sake. Fuel is costly, and the restaurant is cheap, and its cooking better than they could perhaps otherwise afford to have. Indeed, so cheap is the restaurant that actual experience proved the cost of a dinner there to be little more than the cost of the raw material in the market. From this inexpensiveness comes also the custom, which is common, of sending home meals from the eating-houses.

III

AS one descends in the scale of the restaurants, the difference is not so noticeable in the prices of the same dishes, as in the substitution of cheaper varieties of food. At the best eating-houses, the French traditions bear sway more or less; but in the poorer sort the cooking is done entirely by artists deriving their inspirations from the unsophisticated tastes of exclusively native diners. It is perhaps needless to say that they grow characteristic and picturesque as they grow cheap, until at last the cook-shop perfects the descent with a triumph of raciness and local coloring. The cook-shop in Venice opens upon you at almost every turn, — everywhere, in fact, but in the Piazza and the Merceria,— and looking in, you see its vast heaps of frying fish, and its huge caldrons of ever-boiling broth which smell to heaven with garlic and onions. In the alluring windows smoke golden mountains of *polenta* (a thicker kind of mush or hasty-pudding, made of Indian meal, and universally eaten in North Italy), platters of crisp minnows, bowls of rice, roast poultry, dishes of snails and liver; and around the fascinating walls hang huge plates of bronzed earthenware for a lavish and a hospitable show, and for the representation of those scenes of Venetian story which are modeled upon them in bass-relief. Here I like to take my unknown friend — my facchino or gondolier — as he comes to buy his dinner, and bargains eloquently with the cook, who stands with a huge ladle in his hand capable of skimming mysterious things from vasty deeps. I am spellbound by the drama

which ensues, and in which all the chords of the human heart are touched, from those that tremble at high tragedy, to those that are shaken by broad farce. When the diner has bought his dinner, and issues forth with his polenta in one hand, and his fried minnows or stewed snails in the other, my fancy fondly follows him to his gondola station, where he eats it, and quarrels volubly with other gondoliers across the Grand Canal.

A simpler and less ambitious sort of cook-shop abounds in the region of Rialto, where on market mornings I have seen it driving a prodigious business with peasants, gondoliers, and laborers. Its more limited resources consist chiefly of fried eels, fish, polenta, and *sguassetto.* The latter is a true *ropa veneziana,* and is a high-flavored broth, made of those desperate scraps of meat which are found impracticable even by the sausage-makers. Another, but more delicate dish, peculiar to the place, is the clotted blood of poultry, fried in slices with onions. A great number of the families of the poor breakfast at these shops very abundantly, for three soldi each person.

In Venice every holiday has its appropriate viand. During carnival all the butter and cheese shop-windows are whitened with the snow of whipped cream — *panna montata.* At San Martino the bakers parade troops of gingerbread warriors. Later, for Christmas, comes *mandorlato,* which is a candy made of honey and enriched with almonds. In its season only can any of these devotional delicacies be had; but there is a species of cruller, fried in oil, which has all seasons for its own. On the

occasion of every *festa*, and of every *sagra* (the holiday of one parish only), stalls are put up in the squares for the cooking and sale of these crullers, between which and the religious sentiment proper to the whole year there seems to be some occult relation.

In the winter, the whole city appears to abandon herself to cooking for the public, till she threatens hopelessly to disorder the law of demand and supply. There are, to begin with, the cafés and restaurants of every class. Then there are the cook-shops, and the poulterers', and the sausage-makers'. Then, also, every fruit-stall is misty and odorous with roast apples, boiled beans, cabbage, and potatoes. The chestnut-roasters infest every corner, and men, women, and children cry roast pumpkin at every turn — till, at last, hunger seems an absurd and foolish vice, and the ubiquitous beggars, no less than the habitual abstemiousness of every class of the population, become the most perplexing of anomalies.

VII. HOUSEKEEPING IN VENICE

LODGINGS AND APARTMENTS — BEGINNINGS OF VENETIAN HOUSEKEEPING — NEIGHBORS — THE FLOWER OF SERVING-WOMEN — THE WOODMAN AND OTHER TRADESMEN — FOLLOWERS AND HANGERS-ON — THE CREATURES — THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE FLOWER OF SERVING-WOMEN — PARTING WITH HER.

I HOPE that it is by a not unnatural progress I pass from speaking of dinners and diners to the kindred subject of the present chapter, and I trust the reader will not disdain the lowly-minded muse that sings this mild domestic lay. I was resolved in writing this book to tell — what I had found most books of travel very slow to tell — as much as possible of the every-day life of a people whose habits are so different from our own; endeavoring to develop a just notion of their character, not only from the show-traits which strangers are most likely to see, but also from experience of such things as strangers are almost likely to miss.

I

THE absolute want of society of my own nation in Venice would have thrown me upon study of the people for my amusement, even if I had cared to learn nothing of them; and the necessity of economical housekeeping would have caused me to live in the frugal Venetian fashion, even if I had been disposed to remain a for-

eigner in everything. Of bachelor lodgings I had sufficient experience during my first year; but as most prudent travelers who visit the city for a week take lodgings, I need not describe my own particularly. You can know the houses in which there are rooms to let, by the squares of white paper fastened to the window-shutters; and a casual glance as you pass through the streets gives you the idea that the chief income of the place is derived from letting lodgings. Carpetless, dreary barracks the rooms usually are, with an uncompromising squareness of prints upon the wall, an appalling breadth of husk-bed, a niggardness of wash-bowl, and an obduracy of sofa, never, never to be dissociated in their victim's mind from the idea of the hard bread of Venice on which the gloomy landlady nurtures her purposes of plunder. Flabbiness without softness is the tone of these discouraging chambers, which are dear or not according to the season and the situation. On the sunlit Riva during winter, and on the Grand Canal in summer, they are costly enough, but they are to be found on nearly all the squares at reasonable rates. On the narrow streets, where most native bachelors have them, they are absurdly cheap.

A house, or *casa*, in Venice means a number of rooms, including a whole story in a building, or part of it only, but always completely separated from the story above and below, or from the other rooms on the same floor. Every house has its own entrance from the street, or by a common hall and stairway from the ground-floor, where are the cellars or store-rooms, while each kitchen

is usually on a level with the other rooms of the house to which it belongs. The isolation of the different families is secured (as perfectly as where a building is solely appropriated to each), either by the exclusive possession of a street-door, or by the unsocial domestic habits of Europe. Where the street entrance is in common, every floor has its bell, which, being sounded, summons a servant to some upper window with the demand, very formidable to strangers, "*Chi xe?*" (Who is it?) But you do not answer with your name. You reply, "*Amici!*" (Friends!), on which reassurance the servant draws the latch of the door by a wire running upward to her hand, and permits you to enter and wander about at your leisure till you reach her secret height. This is supposing the master or mistress of the house to be at home. If they are not in, she answers your "*Amici!*" with "*No ghe ne xe!*" (Nobody here!), and lets down a basket by a string outside the window, and fishes up your card.

You bow and give good-day to the people whom you meet in the common hall and on the common stairway, but you rarely know more of them than their names, and you certainly care nothing about them. The sociability of Europe, and more especially of Southern Europe, is shown abroad; under the domestic roof it dwindles and disappears. And indeed it is no wonder, considering how dispiriting and comfortless most of the houses are. The lower windows are heavily barred with iron; the wood-work is rude, even in many palaces in Venice; the rest is stone and stucco; the walls are

not often papered, though they are sometimes painted: the most pleasing and inviting feature of the interior is the frescoed ceiling of the better rooms. The windows shut imperfectly, the heavy wooden blinds imperviously (is it worth while to note that there are no Venetian blinds in Venice?); the doors lift slantingly from the floor, in which their lower hinges are imbedded; the stoves are of plaster, and consume fuel without just return of heat; the balconies alone are always charming, whether they hang high over the streets, or look out upon the canals, and, with the gayly painted ceilings, go far to make the houses habitable.

In Venice most of the desirable situations are on the Grand Canal; but here the rents are something absurdly high, when taken in consideration with the fact that the city is not made a place of residence by foreigners, like Florence, and that it has no commercial activity to enhance the cost of living. House-hunting, under these circumstances, becomes an office of constant surprise and disconcertment to the stranger. You look, for example, at a suite of rooms in a tumble-down old palace, where the walls, shamelessly smartened up with coarse paper, crumble at your touch; where the floor rises and falls like the sea, and the door-frames and window-cases have long lost recollection of the plumb. Madama la Baronessa is at present occupying this pleasant apartment, and you only gain admission after an embassy to procure her permission. Madama la Baronessa receives you courteously, and you pass through her rooms, which are a little in disorder, the Baronessa

being on the point of removal. Madama la Baronessa's hoop-skirts prevail upon the floors; and at the side of the couch which her form lately pressed in slumber, you observe a French novel and a wasted candle in the society of a half-bottle of the wine of the country. A bedroomy smell pervades the whole suite, and through the open window comes a curious stench, explained as the odor of Madama la Baronessa's guinea-pigs, of which she is so fond that she has had their sty placed immediately under her window in the garden. It is this garden which has first taken your heart, with a glimpse caught through the great open door of the palace. It is disordered and wild, but so much the better; its firs are very thick and dark, and there are certain statues, fauns, and nymphs, which weather stains and mosses have made much decenter than the sculptor intended. You think that for this garden's sake you could put up with the house, which must be very cheap. What is the price of the rooms? you ask of the smiling landlord. He answers, without winking, "If taken for several years, a thousand florins a year." At which you suppress the whistle of disdainful surprise, and say you think it will not suit. He calls your attention to the sun, which comes in at every side, which will roast you in summer, and will not (as he would have you think) warm you in winter. "But there is another apartment,"—through which you drag languidly. It is empty now, being last inhabited by an English Ledi,—and her stove-pipes went out of the windows, and blackened the shabby stucco front of the palace.

In a back court, upon a filthy canal, you chance on a house, the curiously frescoed front of which tempts you within. A building which has a lady and gentleman painted in fresco, and making love from balcony to balcony, on the façade, as well as Arlecchino depicted in the act of leaping from the second to the third story, promises something. Promises something, but does not fulfill the promise. The interior is fresh, clean, and new, and cold and dark as a cellar. This house — that is to say, a floor of the house — you may have for four hundred florins a year; and then farewell the world and the light of the sun! for neither will ever find you in that back court, and you will never see anybody but the neighboring laundresses and their children, who cannot enough admire the front of your house.

E via in seguito! This is of housekeeping, not house-hunting. There are pleasant and habitable houses in Venice, but they are not cheap, as many of the uninhabitable houses also are not. Here, discomfort and ruin have their price, and the tumble-down is patched up and sold at rates astonishing to innocent strangers, who come from countries in good repair, where the tumble-down is worth nothing. If I were not ashamed of the idle and foolish old superstitions in which I once believed concerning life in Italy, I would tell how I came gradually to expect very little for a great deal; and how a knowledge of many houses to let made me more and more contented with the house we had taken.

II

IT was in one corner of an old palace on the Grand Canal, and the window of the little parlor looked down upon the water, which had made friends with its painted ceiling, and bestowed tremulous, golden smiles upon it when the sun shone. The dining-room was not so much favored by the water, but it gave upon some green and ever-rustling treetops, that rose to it from a tiny garden-ground, no bigger than a pocket handkerchief. Through this window, also, we could see the quaint, picturesque life of the canal; and from another room we could reach a little terrace above the water. We were not in the *appartamento signorile*, — that was above, — but we were more snugly quartered on the first story from the ground-floor, commonly used as a winter apartment in the old times. But it had been cut up, and suites of rooms had been broken according to the caprice of successive landlords, till it was not at all palatial any more. The upper stories still retained something of former grandeur, and had acquired with time more than former discomfort. We were not envious of them, for they were humbly let at a price less than we paid; though we could not quite repress a covetous yearning for their arched and carven windows, which we saw sometimes from the canal, above the tops of the garden trees.

The gondoliers used always to point out our palace (which was called Casa Falier) as the house in which Marino Faliero was born; and for a long time we clung to the hope that it might be so. But however pleasant

it was, we were forced, on reading up the subject a little, to relinquish our illusion, and accredit an old palace at Santi Apostoli with the distinction we would fain have claimed for ours. I am rather at a loss to explain how it made our lives in Casa Falier any pleasanter to think that a beheaded traitor had been born in it, but we relished the superstition amazingly as long as we could believe in it. What went far to confirm us at first in our credulity was the residence, in another part of the palace, of the Canonico Falier, a collateral descendant of the unhappy doge. He was a very mild-faced old priest, with a white head, which he carried downcast, and crimson legs, on which he moved feebly. He owned the rooms in which he lived, and the apartment in the front of the palace just above our own. The rest of the house belonged to another, for in Venice many of the palaces are divided up and sold among different purchasers, floor by floor, and sometimes even room by room.

III

BUT the tenantry of Casa Falier was far more various than its proprietorship. Over our heads dwelt a Dalmatian family; below our feet a Frenchwoman; at our right, upon the same floor, the English Vice Consul; under him a French family; and over him the family of a marquis in exile from Modena. Except with Mr. ——, the Vice Consul, who was at once our friend and landlord (impossible as this may appear to those who know anything of landlords in Italy), we had no acquaintance, beyond that of salutation, with the many nations

represented in our house. We could not help holding the French people in some sort responsible for the invasion of Mexico; and, though opportunity offered for cultivating the acquaintance of the Modenese, we did not improve it.

As for our Dalmatian friends, we met them and bowed to them a great deal, and we heard them overhead in frequent athletic games, involving noise as of the manœuvring of cavalry; and as they stood a good deal on their balcony, and looked down upon us on ours, we sometimes enjoyed seeing them admirably foreshortened like figures in a frescoed ceiling. The father of this family had no other occupation but to walk up and down the city and view its monuments, for which purpose he one day informed us he had left his native place in Dalmatia, after forty years' study of Venetian history. He further told us that this was by no means worth the time given it; that whereas the streets of Venice were sepulchres in point of narrowness and obscurity, he had a house in Zara, from the windows of which you might see for miles uninterruptedly! Every evening he marched solemnly at the head of a procession of his handsome young children, who went to hear the military music in St. Mark's Square.

The entrance to the house of the Dalmatians — we never knew their names — gave access also to a house in the story above them, which belonged to some mysterious person described on his door-plate as "Co. Prata." I think we never saw Co. Prata himself, and only by chance some members of his family when they came

back from their summer in the country to spend the winter in the city. Prata's "Co.," we gradually learned, meant "Conte," and the little counts and countesses, his children, immediately on their arrival took an active part in the exercises of the Dalmatian cavalry. Later in the fall, certain of the count's vassals came to the *riva* (the gondola landing-stairs which descend to the water before palace-doors and at the ends of streets), in one of the great boats of the Po, with a load of fagots and corncobs for fuel; and this is all we ever knew of our neighbors on the fourth floor. As long as he remained "Co." we yearned to know who and what he was; being interpreted as Conte Prata, he ceased to interest us.

IV

SUCH, then, was the house, and such the neighborhood in which two little people, just married, came to live in Venice. They were by nature of the order of shorn lambs, and Providence, tempering the inclemency of the domestic situation, gave them Giovanna. The house was furnished throughout, and Giovanna had been furnished with it. She was at hand to greet the newcomers, and "This is my wife, the new mistress," said the young *Paron* (*Padrone* in Italian; a salutation with Venetian friends, and the title by which Venetian servants always designate their employers), with the bashful pride proper to the time and place.

Giovanna glowed welcome, and said, with adventurous politeness, that she was very glad of it. "*Serva sua!*"

The *Parona*, not knowing Italian, laughed in English.

So Giovanna took possession of us, and acting upon the great truth that handsome is that handsome does, began at once to make herself a thing of beauty.

As a measure of convenience and of deference to her feelings, we immediately resolved to call her G., merely, when speaking of her in English, instead of Giovanna, which would have troubled her with conjecture concerning what was said of her. And as G. thus became the centre around which our domestic life revolved, she must be somewhat particularly treated of in this account of our housekeeping. I suppose that, given certain temperaments and certain circumstances, this would have been much like play-housekeeping anywhere; in Venice it had, but for the unmistakable florins it cost, a curious property of unreality. It is sufficiently bad to live in a rented house; in a house which you have hired ready-furnished, it is long till your life takes root, and Home blossoms up in the alien place. For a great while we regarded our house merely as very pleasant lodgings, and we were slow to form any relations which could take from our residence its temporary character. If we had thought to get in debt to the butcher, the baker, and the grocer, we might have gone far to establish ourselves at once; but we imprudently paid our way, and consequently had no ties to bind us to our fellow-creatures. In Venice provisions are bought by housekeepers on a scale surprisingly small to one accustomed to wholesale American ways, and G., having the purse, made our little purchases in cash, never buying more

than enough for one meal at a time. Every morning, the fruits and vegetables are distributed from the great market at the Rialto among a hundred green-grocers' stalls in all parts of the city; bread (which is seldom made at home) is found fresh at the baker's; there is a butcher's stall in each campo, with fresh meat. These shops are therefore resorted to for family supplies day by day; and the poor lay in provisions there in portions graduated to a soldo of their ready means. It is a system friendly to poverty, and the small retail prices approximate very closely the real value of the stuff sold, as we sometimes proved by offering to purchase in quantity. Usually no reduction would be made from the retail rate, and it was sufficiently amusing to have the dealer figure up the cost of the quantity we proposed to buy, and then exhibit an exact multiplication of his retail rate by our twenty or fifty. Say an orange is worth a soldo: you get no more than a hundred for a florin, though the dealer will cheerfully go under that number if he can cheat you in the count.

But there were some things which must be brought to the house by the dealers, such as water for drinking and cooking, which is drawn from public cisterns in the squares, and carried by stout young girls to all the houses. These *bigolanti* all come from the mountains of Friuli; they all have rosy cheeks, white teeth, bright eyes, and no waists whatever (in the fashionable sense), but abundance of back. The cisterns are opened about eight o'clock in the morning, and then their day's work begins, with chatter, and splashing, and drawing up

the invention that their fagots are beautiful and sound and dry. But our particular woodman was, in his way, a gifted man. Long before I had dealings with him, I knew him by the superb incantation with which he announced his coming on the Grand Canal. The purport of this was merely that his bark was called the Beautiful Caroline, and that his fagots were fine; but he so dwelt upon the hidden beauties of this idea, and so prolonged their effect upon the mind by artful repetition and the full, round, and resonant roar with which he closed his triumphal hymn, that the hearer was taken with the charm, and held in breathless admiration. By all odds, this woodman's cry was the most impressive of all the street cries of Venice. There may have been an exquisite sadness and sweetness in the wail of the chimney-sweep; a winning pathos in the voice of the vender of roast pumpkin; an oriental fancy and splendor in the fruiterers who cried, "Melons with hearts of fire!" and "Juicy pears that bathe your beard!" — there may have been something peculiarly effective in the song of the chestnut-man who shouted "Fat chestnuts," and added, after a lapse in which you got almost beyond hearing, "and well cooked!" — I do not deny that there was a seductive sincerity in the proclamation of one whose peaches could *not* be called beautiful to look upon, and were consequently advertised as "Ugly, but good!" — I say nothing to detract from the merits of harmonious chair-menders; — to my ears the shout of the melodious fisherman was delectable music, and all the birds of summer sang in the voices of the countrymen who sold finches

and larks in cages, and roses and pinks in pots; — but I say, after all, none of these people combined the vocal power, the sonorous movement, the delicate grace, and the vast compass of our woodman. Yet this man, as far as virtue went, was *vox et praeterea nihil.* He was habitually in drink, and I think his sins had gone near to make him mad — at any rate, he was of a most lunatical deportment. In other lands, the man of whom you are a regular purchaser serves you well; in Italy he conceives that his long service gives him the right to plunder you if possible. I felt in every fibre that this woodman invariably cheated me in measurement, and, indeed, he scarcely denied it on accusation. But my single experience of the more magnificent scoundrels of whom *he* bought the wood originally, contented me with the swindle with which I had become familiarized. On this occasion I took a boat and went to the Custom House, to get my fuel at first hand. The captain of the ship which I boarded wished me to pay more than I gave for fuel delivered at my door, and thereupon ensued the tragic scene of bargaining, as these things are conducted in Italy. We stood up and bargained, we sat down and bargained; the captain turned his back upon me in indignation; I parted from him and took to my boat in scorn; he called me back and displayed the wood — good, sound, dryer than bones; he pointed to the threatening heavens, and declared that it would snow that night, and on the morrow I could not get wood for twice the present price; but I laughed incredulously. Then my captain took another tack, and tried to make

the contract in obsolete currencies, in Austrian pounds, in Venetian pounds; but as I inexorably reduced these into familiar money, he paused desperately, and made me an offer which I accepted with mistaken exultation. For my captain was shrewder than I, and held arts of measurement in reserve against me. He agreed that the measurement and transportation should not cost me the value of his tooth-pick — quite an old and worthless one — which he showed me. Yet I was surprised into the payment of a youth whom this man called to assist at the measurement, and I had to give the boatman drink-money at the end. He promised that the measure should be just: yet if I lifted my eye from the work he placed the logs slantingly on the measure, and threw in knotty chunks that crowded wholesome fuel out, and let the daylight through and through the pile. I protested, and he admitted the wrong when I pointed it out. "*Ga razon, lu!*" (He's right!) he said to his fellows in infamy; and throwing aside the objectionable pieces, proceeded to evade justice by new artifices. When I had this memorable load of wood housed at home, I found that it had cost just what I paid my woodman; I had additionally lost my self-respect in being plundered before my face, and I resolved thereafter to be cheated in quiet dignity behind my back. The woodman exulted in his restored sovereignty, and I lost nothing in penalty for my revolt.

Among other provisioners who come to your house in Venice are those ancient peasant-women who bring fresh milk in bottles, carefully packed in baskets filled

with straw. They set off the whiteness of their wares by the brownness of their sunburned hands and faces, and bear, in their general stoutness and burliness of presence, a curious resemblance to their own comfortable bottles. They wear broad straw hats and dangling earrings of yellow gold, and are the pleasantest sight of the morning streets of Venice, to the stoniness of which they bring a sense of the country's clovery pasturage, in the milk just drawn from the great cream-colored cows.

Fishermen, also, come down the little *calli* — with shallow baskets of fish upon their heads and under either arm, and cry their soles and mackerel to the neighborhood, stopping now and then at some door to bargain away the eels which they chop into sections as the thrilling drama proceeds, and hand over as a dénouement at the purchaser's own price. "Beautiful and all alive!" is the engaging cry with which they hawk their fish.

Besides these daily purveyors, there are men of divers arts who come to exercise their crafts at your house: not chimney-sweeps merely, but glaziers, and that sort of workmen, and, best of all, chair-menders,— who bear a mended chair upon their shoulders for a sign, with pieces of white wood for further mending, a drawing-knife, a hammer, and a sheaf of rushes, and who sit down at your door, and plait the rush bottoms of your kitchen chairs anew, and make heaps of fragrant whittlings with their knives, and gossip with your serving-woman.

VI

BUT in the mean time our own serving-woman Giovanna, the great central principle of our housekeeping, is waiting to be personally presented to the company. In Italy, there are old crones so haggard that it is hard not to believe them created just as crooked, and foul, and full of fluff and years as you behold them, and you cannot understand how so much frowziness and so little hair, so great show of fangs and so few teeth, are growths from any ordinary human birth. G. is no longer young, but she is not after the likeness of these old women. It is of a middle age, unbeginning, interminable, of which she gives you the impression. She has brown apple-cheeks, just touched with frost; her nose is of a strawberry formation, abounding in small dints, and having the slightly shrunken effect observable in tardy perfections of the fruit mentioned. A tough, pleasant, indestructible woman — for use, we thought, not ornament — the mother of a family, a good Catholic, and the flower of serving-women.

I do not think that Venetian servants are, as a class, given to pilfering; but knowing ourselves subject by nature to pillage, we cannot repress a feeling of gratitude to G. that she does not prey upon us. She strictly accounts for all money given her at the close of each week, and to this end keeps a kind of account-book, which I cannot help regarding as in some sort an inspired volume, being privy to the fact, confirmed by her

own confession, that G. is not good for reading and writing. On settling with her I have been permitted to look into this book, which is all in capital letters,— each the evident result of serious labor,— with figures representing combinations of the pot-hook according to bold and original conceptions. The spelling is also a remarkable effort of creative genius. The only difficulty under which the author labors in regard to the book is the confusion naturally resulting from the effort to get literature right side up when it has got upside down. The writing is a kind of pugilism — the strokes being made straight out from the shoulder. The account-book is always carried about with her in a fathomless pocket overflowing with the aggregations of a housekeeper who can throw nothing away, to wit: match-boxes, now appointed to hold buttons and hooks and eyes; beeswax in the lump; the door-key (which in Venice takes a formidable size, and impresses you at first sight as ordnance); a patch-bag; a porte-monnaie; many lead-pencils in the stump; scissors, pincushions, and the Beata Vergine in a frame. Indeed, this incapability of throwing things away is made to bear rather severely upon us in some things, such as the continual reappearance of familiar dishes at table — particularly veteran *bifsteca*. But we fancy that the same frugal instinct is exercised to our advantage and comfort in other things, for G. makes a great show and merit of denying our charity to those bold and adventurous children of sorrow who do not scruple to ring your doorbell and demand alms. It is true that with G.,

as with every Italian, almsgiving enters into the theory and practice of the Christian life, but she will not suffer misery to abuse its privileges. She has no hesitation, however, in bringing certain objects of compassion to our notice, and she procures small services to be done for us by many lame and halt of her acquaintance. Having bought my boat (I come, in time, to be willing to sell it again for half its cost to me), I require a menial to clean it now and then, and Giovanna first calls me a youthful Gobbo for the work, — a festive hunchback, a bright-hearted whistler of comic opera. Whether this blithe humor is not considered decent, I do not know, but though the Gobbo serves me faithfully, I find him one day replaced by a venerable man, whom — from his personal resemblance to Time — I should think much better occupied with an hour-glass, or engaged with a scythe in mowing me and other mortals down, than in cleaning my boat. But all day long he sits on my *riva* in the sun, when it shines, gazing fixedly at my boat; and when the day is dark, he lurks about the street, accessible to my slightest boating impulse. He salutes my going out and coming in with grave reverence, and I think he has no work to do but that which G.'s wise compassion has given him from me. Suddenly, like the Gobbo, the Vecchio also disappears, and I hear vaguely — for in Venice you never know anything with precision — that he has found a regular employment in Padua, and again that he is dead. While he lasts, G. has a pleasant, even a sportive manner with this poor old man, calculated to cheer his de-

clining years; but, as I say, cases of insolent and aggressive misery fail to touch her. The kind of wretchedness that comes breathing woe and *sciampagnin* (little champagne,—the name which the Venetian populace gave to a fierce and deadly kind of brandy drunk during the scarcity of wine) under our window, and there spends a leisure hour in the rehearsal of distress, establishes no claim either upon her pity or her weakness. She is deaf to the voice of that sorrow, the monotonous whine of that dolor cannot move her to the purchase of a guilty tranquillity. I imagine, however, that she is afraid to deny charity to the fat Capuchin friar in spectacles and bare feet, who comes twice a month to levy contributions of bread and fuel for his convent, for we hear her declare from the window that the master is not at home, whenever the good brother rings; and at last, as this excuse gives out, she ceases to respond to his ring at all.

Sometimes, during the summer weather, a certain tremulous old troubadour comes down our street, with an aged cithern, on which he strums feebly with the bones remaining to him from former fingers, and in a thin quavering voice pipes worn-out ditties of youth and love. Sadder music I have never heard; but though it has at times drawn from me the sigh of sensibility without referring my sympathy to my pocket, I always hear the compassionate soldo of Giovanna clink reproof to me upon the pavement. Perhaps that slender note touches something finer than habitual charity in her middle-aged bosom, for these were songs, she

says, that they used to sing when she was a girl, and Venice was gay and glad, and different from now— "*Veramente, tutt' altra, signor!*"

VII

IT is through Giovanna's charitable disposition that we make the acquaintance of two weird sisters, who live not far from us in Calle Falier, and whom we know to this day merely as the Creatures — *creatura* being in the vocabulary of Venetian pity the term for a fellow-being somewhat more pitiable than a *poveretta*. Our Creatures are both well stricken in years, and one of them has some incurable disorder which frequently confines her to the wretched cellar in which they live with the invalid's husband,— a mild, pleasant-faced man, a tailor by trade, and of batlike habits, who hovers about their dusky doorway in the summer twilight. These people have but one room, and a little nook of kitchen at the side; and not only does the sun never find his way into their habitation, but even the daylight cannot penetrate it. They pay about four florins a month for the place, and I hope their landlord is as happy as his tenants. For though one is sick, and all are wretchedly poor, they are far from being discontented. They are opulent in the possession of a small dog, which they have raised from the cradle, as it were, and adopted into the family. They are never tired of playing with their dog,— the poor old children,— and every slight display of intelligence on his part delights them. They think it fine in him to follow us as we go by,

but pretend to beat him; and then they excuse him, and call him ill names, and catch him up, and hug him and kiss him. He feeds upon their slender means and the pickings that G. carefully carries him from our kitchen, and gives to him on our doorstep in spite of us, while she gossips with his mistresses, who chorus our appearance at such times with "*I miei rispetti, signori!*" We often see them in the street, and at a distance from home, carrying mysterious bundles of clothes; and at last we learn their vocation, which is one not known out of Italian cities, I think. There, instead of many pawnbroker's shops, there is one large municipal pawnshop, which is called the Monte di Pietà, where the needy pawn their goods. The system is centuries old in Italy, but there are people who to this day cannot summon courage to repair in person to the Mount of Pity, and, to meet their wants, there has grown up a class of frowzy old women who transact the business for them, and receive a small percentage for their trouble. Our poor old Creatures were of this class, and as there were many persons in impoverished, decaying Venice who had need of the succor they procured, they made out to earn a living when both were well, and to eke out existence by charity when one was ill. They were harmless neighbors, and I believe they regretted our removal, when this took place, for they used to sit down under an arcade opposite our new house, and spend the duller intervals of trade in the contemplation of our windows.

VIII

THE alarming spirit of nepotism which Giovanna developed at a later day was, I fear, a growth from the encouragement we gave her charitable disposition. But for several months it was merely from the fact of a boy who came and whistled at the door until Giovanna opened it and reproved him in the name of all the saints and powers of darkness, that we knew her to be a mother; and we merely had her word for the existence of a husband, who dealt in poultry. Without seeing Giovanna's husband, I nevertheless knew him to be a man of downy exterior, wearing a canvas apron, thickly crusted with the gore of fowls, who sat at the door of his shop and plucked chickens forever, as with the tireless hand of Fate. I divined that he lived in an atmosphere of scalded pullet; that three earthen cups of clotted chickens' blood, placed upon his window-shelf, formed his idea of an attractive display, and that he shadowed forth his conceptions of the beautiful in symmetrical rows of plucked chickens presenting to the public eye rear views embellished with a single feather erect in the tail of each bird; that he must be, through the ethics of competition, the sworn foe of those illogical peasants who bring dead poultry to town in cages, like singing birds. He turned out on actual acquaintance to be all I had prefigured him, with the additional merit of having a large red nose, a sidelong, fugitive gait, and a hangdog countenance. He furnished us poultry at rates slightly advanced, I believe.

As for the boy, he turned up after a while as a constant guest, and took possession of the kitchen. He came near banishment at one time for catching a large number of sea-crabs in the canal, and confining them in a basket in the kitchen, which they left at the dead hour of night, to wander all over our house, — making a mysterious and alarming sound of snapping, like an army of death-watches, and eluding all efforts at capture. On another occasion, he fell into the canal before our house, and terrified us by going under twice before the arrival of the old gondolier, who called out to him "*Petta! petta!*" (Wait! wait!) as he placidly pushed his boat to the spot. Developing other disagreeable traits, Beppo was finally driven into exile, from which he nevertheless furtively returned on holidays.

The family of Giovanna thus gradually encroaching upon us, we came also to know her mother, — a dread and loathly old lady, whom we commonly encountered at nightfall in our street, where she lay in wait, as it were, to prey upon the fragrance of the dinner drifting from the kitchen windows of our neighbor, the Duchess of Parma. We did not find her more comfortable in our own kitchen, where we often saw her. The place itself is weird and terrible, — low-ceiled, with the stone hearth built out into the room, and the melodramatic implements of Venetian cookery dangling tragically from the wall. Here is no every-day cheerfulness of cooking-range, but grotesque andirons wading into the bristling embers, and a long crane with villainous pots gib-

beted upon it. When Giovanna's mother, then (of the Italian hags, haggard), rises to do us reverence from the darkest corner of this kitchen, and croaks her good wishes for our long life, continued health, and endless happiness, it has the effect upon our spirits of the darkest malediction.

Not more pleasing, though altogether lighter and cheerfuler, was Giovanna's sister-in-law, whom we knew only as the Cognata. Making her appearance first upon the occasion of Giovanna's sickness, she slowly but surely established herself as an habitual presence, and threatened at one time, as we fancied, to become our paid servant. But a happy calamity, which one night carried off a carpet and the window curtains of an unoccupied room, cast an evil suspicion upon the Cognata, and she never appeared after the discovery of the theft. We suspected her of having invented some dishes of which we were very fond, and we hated her for oppressing us with a sense of many surreptitious favors. Objectively, she was a slim, hoopless little woman, with a tendency to be always at the street-door when we opened it. She had a narrow, narrow face, with eyes of terrible slyness, an applausive smile, and a demeanor of slavish patronage. Our kitchen, after her addition to the household, became the banqueting-hall of Giovanna's family, who dined there every day upon dishes of fish and garlic, that gave the house the general savor of a low cookshop.

IX

AS for Giovanna herself, she had the natural tendency of excellent people to place others in subjection. Our servitude at first was not hard, and consisted chiefly in the stimulation of appetite to extraordinary efforts when G. had attempted to please us with some novelty in cooking. She held us to a strict account in this respect; but indeed our applause was for the most part willing enough. Her culinary execution, first revealing itself in a noble rendering of our ideas of roast potatoes, — a delicacy foreign to the Venetian kitchen, — culminated at last in the same style of *polpetti* (croquettes) which furnished forth the table of our neighbor, the Duchess, and was a perpetual triumph with us.

But G.'s spirit was not wholly that of the serving-woman. We noted in her the liveliness of wit seldom absent from the Italian poor. She was a great babbler, and talked willingly to herself, and to inanimate things, when there was no other chance for talk. She was profuse in maledictions of bad weather, which she held up to scorn as that dog of a weather. The crookedness of the fuel transported her, and she upbraided the fagots as springing from races of ugly old curs. (The vocabulary of Venetian abuse is inexhaustible, and the Venetians invent and combine terms of opprobrium with endless facility, but all abuse begins and ends with the attribution of doggishness.) The conscription was held in the campo near us, and G. declared the place to have become unendurable — "*proprio un campo di sospiri!*"

(really a field of sighs). "*Staga comodo!*" she said to a guest of ours who would have moved his chair to let her pass between him and the wall. "Don't move; the way to Paradise is not wider than this."

We sometimes lamented that Giovanna, who did not sleep in the house, should come to us so late in the morning; but we could not deal harshly with her on that account, met, as we always were, with plentiful and admirable excuses. Who were we, indeed, to place our wishes in the balance against the welfare of the sick neighbor with whom Giovanna passed so many nights of vigil? Should we reproach her with tardiness when she had not closed the eye all night for a headache properly of the devil? If she came late in the morning, she stayed late at night; and it sometimes happened that when the Paron and Parona, supposing her gone, made a stealthy expedition to the kitchen for cold chicken, they found her there at midnight in the fell company of the Cognata, bibbing the wine of the country and holding a mild Italian revel with that vinegar and the stony bread of Venice.

I have said G. was the flower of serving-women; and so at first she seemed, and it was long till we doubted her perfection. We knew ourselves to be very young, and weak, and unworthy. The Parona had the rare gift of learning to speak less and less Italian every day, and fell inevitably into subjection. The Paron in a domestic point of view was naturally nothing. It had been strange indeed if Giovanna, beholding the great contrast we presented to herself in many respects, had forborne to

abuse her advantage over us. But we trusted her implicitly, and I hardly know how or when it was that we began to waver in our confidence. It is certain that with the lapse of time we came gradually to have breakfast at twelve o'clock instead of nine, as we had originally appointed it, and that G. grew to consume the greater part of the day in making our small purchases, and to give us our belated dinners at seven o'clock. We protested, and temporary reforms ensued, only to be succeeded by more hopeless lapses; but it was not till all entreaties and threats failed that we began to think seriously it would be well to have done with Giovanna, as an unprofitable servant. I give the result, not all the nice causes from which it came. But the question was, How to get rid of a poor woman and a civil, and the mother of a family dependent in great part upon her labor? We solemnly resolved a hundred times to dismiss G., and we shrank a hundred times from inflicting the blow. At last, we hit upon an artifice by which we could dispense with Giovanna, and keep an easy conscience. We had long ceased to dine at home, in despair; and now we decided to take another house, in which there were other servants. But even then it was a sore struggle to part with the flower of serving-women, who was set over the vacated house to put it in order after our flitting, and with whom the imprudent Paron settled the last account in the familiar little dining-room, surrounded by the depressing influences of the empty chambers. The place was peopled, after all, though we had left it, and I think the tenants

who come after us will be haunted by our spectres, crowding them on the pleasant little balcony, and sitting down with them at table. G. stood there, the genius of the place, and wept six regretful tears, each one of which drew a florin from the purse of the Paron. She had hoped to remain with us always while we lived in Venice; but now that she could no longer look to us for support, the Lord must take care of her. The gush of grief was transient; it relieved her, and she came out sunnily a moment after. The Paron went his way more sorrowfully, taking leave at last with the fine burst of Christian philosophy: "We are none of us masters of ourselves in this world, and cannot do what we wish. *Ma! Come si fa? Ci vuol pazienza!*" Yet he was undeniably lightened in heart. He had cut adrift from old moorings, and had crossed the Grand Canal. G. did not follow him, nor any of the long line of pensioners who used to come on certain feast-days, to levy tribute of eggs at the old house. (The postman was among these, on Christmas and New Year's, and as he received eggs at every house, it was a problem with us, unsolved to this hour, how he carried them all, and what he did with them.) Not the least among the Paron's causes for self-gratulation was the non-appearance at his new abode of two local newspapers, for which in an evil hour he had subscribed, which were delivered with unsparing regularity, and which, being never read, formed the keenest reproach of his imprudent outlay and his idle neglect of their contents.

VIII. THE BALCONY ON THE GRAND CANAL

THE WITCHERY OF VENICE — PASSERS ON THE GRAND CANAL — A FRESCO ON THE CANAL — BUSINESS CRAFT — A TERRIBLE QUARREL AND A WEIRD SPECTACLE.

VENICE seems a fantastic vision, from which the world must at last awake some morning, and find that after all it has only been dreaming, and that there never was any such city. There our race seems to be in earnest in nothing. People sometimes work, but as if without any aim; they suffer, and you fancy them playing at wretchedness. The Church of St. Mark, standing so solidly, with a thousand years under the feet of its innumerable pillars, is not in the least gray with time.

> "All has suffered a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange,"

in this fabulous city. The prose of earth has risen poetry from its baptism in the sea.

I

IF, living constantly in Venice, you sometimes for a little while forget how marvelous she is, at any moment you may be startled into vivid remembrance. The cunning city beguiles you street by street, and step by step, into some old court, where a flight of marble stairs leads high up to the pillared gallery of an empty palace, with a climbing vine, green and purple, on its old decay, and one or two gaunt trees stretching their

heads to look into the lofty windows, — blind long ago to their leafy tenderness, — while at their feet is some richly carven well curb, with the beauty of the sculptor's soul wrought forever into the stone. Or Venice lures you in a gondola into one of her remote canals, where you glide through an avenue as secret and as still as if sea-deep under our work-day world; where the grim stone heads over the water-gates of the palaces stare at you in austere surprise; where the innumerable balconies are full of the Absences of gay cavaliers and sprightly dames, gossiping and making love to one another, from their airy perches. Or if the city's mood is one of bolder charm, she fascinates you in the very places where you think her power is the weakest, and as if impatient of your forgetfulness, dares a wilder beauty, and enthralls with a yet more unearthly and incredible enchantment. It is in the Piazza, and the Austrian band is playing, and the promenaders pace solemnly up and down to the music, and the gentle Italian idlers at Florian's brood vacantly over their little cups of coffee, and nothing can be more stupid; when suddenly everything is changed, and a memorable tournament flashes up in many-glittering action upon the scene, and there, on the gallery of the church, before the horses of bronze, sit the Senators, bright-robed, and in the midst the bonneted Doge with his guest Petrarch at his side. Or the old Carnival, which had six months of every year to riot in, comes back and throngs the place with a motley company, — dominos, harlequins, pantaloni, illustrissimi and illustrissime, and

perhaps even the Doge himself, who has the right of incognito when he wears a little mask of wax at his button-hole. Or may be the grander day revisits Venice, when Doria has sent word from his fleet of Genoese at Chioggia that he will listen to the Senate when he has bridled the horses of Saint Mark, — and the whole Republic of rich and poor crowds the square, demanding the release of Pisani, who comes forth from his prison to create victory from the dust of the crumbling commonwealth.

But whatever surprise of memorable or beautiful Venice may prepare for your forgetfulness, be sure it will be complete and resistless. But I must count as half lost the year spent in Venice before I took a house upon the Grand Canal. There alone can existence have the perfect local flavor. But by what witchery touched one's being suffers the common sea-change, till life at last seems to ebb and flow with the tide in that wonder-avenue of palaces, it would be idle to attempt to tell. I can only take you to our dear little balcony at Casa Falier, and comment not very coherently on the scene upon the water under us.

II

I AM sure (since it is either in the spring or the fall) you will not be surprised to see, the first thing, a boat-load of those English, who go by from the station to their hotels, every day, in well-freighted gondolas. These parties of traveling Englishry are all singularly alike, from the "party" traveling alone with his opera-

glass and satchel, to the party which fills a gondola with well-cushioned English middle age, ruddy English youth, and substantial English baggage. We have learned to known them all very well: the father and the mother sit upon the back seat, and their comely girls at the sides and front. These girls all have the roses of English health upon their cheeks; they all wear little rowdy English hats, and blond waterfalls of hair tumble upon their broad English backs. They are coming from Switzerland and Germany, and they are going south to Rome and to Naples, and they always pause at Venice a few days. To-morrow we shall see them in the Piazza, and at Florian's, and St. Mark's, and the Ducal Palace; and the young ladies will cross the Bridge of Sighs, and will sentimentally feed the vagabond pigeons of St. Mark which loaf about the Piazza and defile the sculptures. But now our travelers are themselves very hungry, and are chiefly anxious about the table d'hôte of their hotel, where it is perfectly certain that if they fall into talk there with any of our nation, the respectable English father will remark that this war in America is a very sad war, and will ask to know when it will all end. The truth is, Americans do not like these people, and I believe there is no love lost on the other side. But, in many things, they are travelers to be honored, if not liked: they voyage through all countries, and without awaking fervent affection in any land through which they pass; but their sterling honesty and truth have made the English tongue a draft upon the unlimited confidence of the continental peoples.

They come to Venice chiefly in the autumn, and October is the month of the Sunsets and the English. The sunsets are best seen from the Public Gardens, whence one looks westward, and beholds them glorious behind the domes and towers of San Giorgio Maggiore and the church of the Redentore. Sometimes, when the sky is clear, your sunset on the lagoon is a fine thing; for then the sun goes down into the water with a broad trail of bloody red behind him, as if, wounded far out at sea, he had dragged himself landward across the crimsoning expanses, and fallen and died as he reached the land. But we (upon whom the idleness of Venice grows daily, and from whom the Gardens, therefore, grow farther and farther) are uncommonly content to take our bit of sunset as we get it from our balcony, through the avenue opened by the narrow canal opposite. We like the earlier afternoon to have been a little rainy, when we have our sunset splendid as the fury of a passionate beauty — all tears and fire. There is a pretty but impertinent little palace on the corner which is formed by this canal as it enters the Canalazzo, and from the palace, high over the smaller channel, hangs an airy balcony. When the sunset sky, under and over the balcony, is of that pathetic and angry red which I have tried to figure, we think ourselves rich in the neighborhood of that part of the "Palace of Art," whereon

> "The light aerial gallery, golden railed,
> Burnt like a fringe of fire."

And so, after all, we do not think we have lost any greater thing in not seeing the sunset from the Gardens,

where half a dozen artists are always painting it, or from the quay of the Zattere, where it is splendid over and and under the island church of San Giorgio in Alga.

It is only the English and the other tourist strangers who go by upon the Grand Canal during the day. But in the hours just before the summer twilight the gondolas of the citizens appear, and then you may see whatever is left of Venetian gayety, and looking down upon the groups in the open gondolas may witness something of the home life of the Italians, who live out-of-doors.

The groups do not vary a great deal one from another: inevitably the pale-faced papa, the fat mamma, the over-dressed handsome young girls. We learned to look for certain gondolas, and grew to feel a fond interest in a very mild young man who took the air in company and contrast with a ferocious bull-dog. He was always smoking languidly, that mild young man, and I fancied in his countenance a gentle, gentle antagonism to life — the proportionate Byronic misanthropy, which might arise from sugar and water taken instead of gin. But we really knew nothing about him, and our conjecture was conjecture. Officers went by in their brilliant uniforms, and gave the scene an alien splendor. Among these we enjoyed best the spectacle of an old major, or perhaps general, in whom the arrogance of youth had stiffened into a chill hauteur, and who frowned above his gray overwhelming mustache upon the passers, like a citadel grim with battle and age. We used to fancy, with a certain luxurious sense of our own safety,

that one broadside from those fortressed eyes could blow from the water the slight pleasure-boats in which the young Venetian idlers were innocently disporting. But again this was merely conjecture. The general's glance may have had no such power. Indeed, the furniture of our apartment sustained no damage from it, even when concentrated through an opera-glass, by which means the brave officer at times perused our humble lodging from the balcony of his own over against us. He may have been no more dangerous in his way than two aged sisters (whom we saw every evening) were in theirs. They represented Beauty in its most inexorable and persevering form, and perhaps they had one day been belles and could not forget it. They were very old indeed, but their dresses were new and their paint fresh, and as they glided by in the good-natured twilight one had no heart to smile at them. We gave our smiles, and now and then our soldi, to the swarthy beggar, who, being short of legs, rowed up and down the canal in a boat, and overhauled Charity in the gondolas. He was a singular compromise, in his vocation and his equipment, between the mendicant and corsair: I fear he would not have hesitated to assume the pirate altogether in lonelier waters; and had I been a heavily laden oyster-boat returning by night through some remote and dark canal, I would have steered clear of that truculent-looking craft, of which the crew must have fought with a desperation proportioned to the lack of legs and the difficulty of running away, in case of defeat.

About nightfall came the market boats on their way to the Rialto market, bringing heaped fruit and vegetables from the mainland; and far into the night the soft dip of the oar and the gurgling progress of the boats was company and lullaby. By this time, if we looked out again, we found the moon risen, and the ghost of dead Venice spectrally happy in haunting the lonesome palaces, and the sea, which had so loved Venice, kissing and caressing the tide-worn marble steps where her feet seemed to rest.

III

AT night sometimes we saw from our balcony one of those *freschi*, which once formed the chief splendor of festive occasions in Venice, and are peculiar to the city, where alone their effects are possible. The fresco is a procession of boats with music and lights. Two immense barges, illumined with hundreds of paper lanterns, carry the military bands; the boats of the civil and military dignitaries follow, and then the gondolas of such citizens as choose to take part in the display,—though since 1859 no Italian, unless a government official, has been seen in the procession. No gondola has less than two lanterns, and many have eight or ten, shedding mellow lights of blue, and red, and purple, over uniforms and silken robes. The soldiers of the bands breathe from their instruments music the most perfect and exquisite of its kind in the world; and as the procession takes the width of the Grand Canal in its magnificent course, soft crimson flushes play upon

the old, weather-darkened palaces, and die tenderly away, giving to light and then to shadow the opulent sculptures of pillar, and arch, and spandrel, and weirdly illuminating the grim and bearded visages of stone that peer down from doorway and window. It is a sight more gracious and fairy than ever poet dreamed; and I feel that the lights and the music have only got into my description by name, and that you would not know them when you saw and heard them, from anything I say. In other days, people tell you, the fresco was much more impressive than now. At intervals, rockets used to be sent up, and the Bengal lights, burned during the progress of the boats, threw the gondoliers' shadows, giant-huge, on the palace walls. But, for my part, I do not care to have the fresco other than I know it: indeed, for my own selfish pleasure, I should be sorry to have Venice in any way less fallen and forlorn than she is.

IV

WITHOUT doubt the most picturesque craft ever seen on the Grand Canal are the great boats of the river Po, which, crossing the lagoons from Chioggia, come up to the city with the swelling sea. They are built with a pointed stern and bow rising with the sweep of a short curve from the water high above the cabin roof, which is always covered with a straw matting. Black is not the color of the gondolas alone, but of all boats in Venetia, and these of the Po are like immense funeral barges; any one of them might be sent to take King Arthur and bear him to Avalon, whither I think most of

them are bound. A path runs along either gunwale, on which the men pace as they pole the boat up the canal, — her great sail folded and lying with the prostrate mast upon the deck. The rudder is a prodigious affair, and the man at the helm is commonly kind enough to wear a red cap with a blue tassel, and to smoke. The other persons on board are not less obliging and picturesque, from the dark-eyed young mother who sits with her child in her arms at the cabin-door, to the bronze boy who figures in play at her feet, with a small yellow dog of the race already noticed in charge of the fuel-boats from Dalmatia. The father of the family, whom we take to be the commander of the vessel, gracefully occupies himself in sitting down and gazing at the babe and its mother. It is an old habit of mine, formed in childhood from looking at rafts upon the Ohio, to attribute, with a kind of heartache, supreme earthly happiness to the navigators of lazy river craft; and as we glance down upon these people from our balcony, I choose to think them immensely contented, and try, in a feeble, tacit way, to make friends with so much bliss. But I am always repelled in these advances by the small yellow dog, who is rendered extremely irascible by my contemplation of the boat under his care, and who, ruffling his hair as a hen ruffles her feathers, never fails to bark furious resentment of my longing.

Far different from the picture presented by this boat's progress — the peacefulness of which even the bad temper of the small yellow dog could not mar — was

with a foamy volubility that quite left my powers of comprehension behind. At last the townsman, executing a *pas seul* of uncommon violence, stooped and picked up a bit of lime, while the countryman, taking shelter at the stern of his boat, there attended the shot. To my infinite disappointment it was not fired. The Venetian seemed to have touched the climax of his passion in the mere demonstration of hostility, and gently gathering up his oar gave the countryman the right of way. The courage of the latter rose as the danger passed, and as far as he could be heard, he continued to exult in the wildest excesses of insult: "Ah-heigh! brutal executioner! Ah, hideous headsman!" *Da capo.* I now know that these people never intended to do more than quarrel, and no doubt they parted as well pleased as if they had actually carried broken heads from the encounter. But at the time I felt trifled with by the result, for my disappointments arising out of the dramatic manner of the Italians had not yet been frequent enough to teach me to expect nothing from it.

There was some compensation for me — coming, like all compensation, a long while after the loss — in the spectacle of a funeral procession on the Grand Canal, which had a singular and imposing solemnity possible only to the place. It was the funeral of an Austrian general, whose coffin, mounted on a sable catafalque, was borne upon the middle boat of the three that moved abreast. The barges on either side bristled with the bayonets of soldiery, but the dead man was alone in his boat, except for one strange figure that stood at

the head of the coffin, and rested its glittering hand upon the black fall of the drapery. This was a man clad cap-a-pie in a perfect suit of gleaming mail, with his visor down, and his shoulders swept by the heavy raven plumes of his helm. As at times he moved from side to side, and glanced upward at the old palaces, sad in the yellow morning light, he put out of sight, for me, everything else upon the canal, and seemed the ghost of some crusader come back to Venice, in wonder if this city, lying dead under the hoofs of the Croat, were indeed that same haughty Lady of the Sea who had once sent her blind old Doge to beat down the pride of an empire and disdain its crown.

IX. A DAYBREAK RAMBLE

FRESHNESS OF THE WORLD AT 4 A. M. — DREAMLIKE EFFECTS — PIAZZA AND CHURCH OF ST. MARK AT DAYBREAK — MARKETING AT THE RIALTO — CHARACTERISTIC PERSONALITIES — THOUGHTFUL ASPECT OF THE GOBBO.

ONE summer morning the mosquitoes played for me with sleep, and won. It was half past four, and as it had often been my humor to see Venice at that hour, I got up and went out for a stroll through the city.

I

THIS morning walk did not lay the foundation of a habit of early rising in me, but I nevertheless advise people always to get up at half past four, if they wish to receive the most vivid impressions, and to take the most absorbing interest in everything in the world. It was with a feeling absolutely novel that I looked about me that morning; there was a breezy freshness and clearness in my perceptions altogether delightful, and I fraternized so cordially with Nature that I do not think, if I had sat down immediately after to write out the experience, I should have at all patronized her, as I am afraid scribbling people sometimes do. I know that my feeling of brotherhood in the case of two sparrows, which obliged me by hopping down from a garden wall

at the end of Calle Falier and promenading on the pavement, was quite humble and sincere; and that I resented the ill-nature of a cat,

"Whom love kept wakeful and the muse,"

and who at that hour was spitefully reviling the morn from a window grating. As I went by the gate of the Canonica's little garden, the flowers saluted me with a breath of perfume, — I think the white honeysuckle was first to offer me this politeness, — and the dumpy little statues engagingly joined them.

After passing the bridge, the first thing to do was to drink a cup of coffee at the Caffè Ponte di Ferro, where the eyebrows of the waiter expressed a mild surprise at my early presence. There was no one else in the place but an old gentleman talking thoughtfully to himself on the subject of two florins, while he poured his coffee into a glass of water, before drinking it. As I lingered a moment over my cup, I was reinforced by a company of soldiers, marching to parade in the Campo di Marte. Their officers went at their head, laughing and chatting, and one of the lieutenants, smoking a long pipe, gave me a feeling of satisfaction comparable only to that which I experienced shortly afterward in beholding a stoutly built small dog on the Ponte San Moisè. He was only a few inches high, and it must have been through some mist of dreams yet hanging about me that he impressed me as something elephantine. When I stooped down and patted him on the head, I felt colossal.

On my way to the Piazza, I stopped in the church of

Saint Mary of the Lily, where, in company with one other sinner, I found a relish in the early sacristan's deliberate manner of lighting the candles on the altar. My fellow-sinner was kneeling, and repeating his prayers. He now and then tapped himself absent-mindedly on the breast and forehead, and gave a good deal of his attention to me as I stood at the door, hat in hand. The hour and the place invested him with so much interest, that I parted from him with emotion. My feelings were next involved by an abrupt separation from a young English East-Indian, whom I overheard asking the keeper of a café his way to the Campo di Marte. He was a claret-colored young fellow, tall, and wearing folds of white muslin around his hat. In another world I hope to know how he liked the parade that morning.

I discovered that Piazza San Marco is every morning swept by troops of ragged facchini, who gossip noisily and quarrelsomely together over their work. Bootblacks, also, were in attendance, and several followed my progress through the square, in the vague hope that I would relent and have my boots blacked. One peerless waiter stood alone amid the desert elegance of Caffè Florian, which is never shut, day or night, from year to year. At the Café of the Greeks, two individuals of the Greek nation were drinking coffee.

II

I WENT upon the Molo, passing between the pillars of the Lion and the Saint, and walked freely back and forth, taking in the prospect of water and of vague is-

lands breaking the silver of the lagoons, like those designs wrought in apparent relief on old Venetian mirrors. I walked there freely, for though there were already many gondoliers at the station, not one took me for a foreigner or offered me a boat. At that hour, I was in myself so improbable that, if they saw me at all, I must have appeared to them as a dream. My sense of security was sweet, but it was false; for on going into the church of St. Mark, the keener eye of the sacristan detected me. He instantly offered to show me the Zeno Chapel; but I declined, preferring the church, where I found the space before the high altar filled with market-people come to hear the early mass. As I passed out of the church, I witnessed the partial awaking of a fellow Venetian who had spent the night in a sitting posture, between the columns of the main entrance. He looked puffy, scornful, and uncomfortable, and at the moment of falling back to slumber tried to smoke an unlighted cigarette, which he held between his lips. I found none of the shops open as I passed through the Merceria, and but for myself, and here and there a laborer going to work, the busy thoroughfare seemed deserted. In the mere wantonness of power and the security of solitude, I indulged myself in snapping several door-latches, which gave me a pleasure as keen as that of boyhood from passing a stick along the pickets of a fence. I was in nowise abashed to be discovered in this amusement by an old peasant-woman, bearing at each end of a yoke the usual basket with bottles of milk packed in straw.

Entering Campo San Bartolomeo, I found trade already astir in that noisy place; the voice of cheap bargains, which by noonday swells into an intolerable uproar, was beginning to be heard. Having lived in Campo San Bartolomeo, I recognized several familiar faces there, and particularly noted among them that of a certain fruit-vender, who frequently swindled me in my small dealings with him. He now sat before his stand, and for a man of a fat and greasy presence looked very fresh and brisk, and as if he had passed a good night.

III

ON the other side of the Rialto Bridge, the market was preparing for the purchasers. Butchers were arranging their shops; fruit-stands, and stands for the sale of crockery, and — as I must say for want of a better word, if there is any — notions, were in a state of tasteful readiness. The person on the steps of the bridge, who had exposed his stock of cheap clothing and coarse felt hats on the parapet, had so far completed his preparations as to have leisure to be talking himself hot and hoarse with the neighboring barber. He was in a perfectly good humor, and was merely giving a dramatic flavor to some question of six soldi.

At the landings of the market-place, squadrons of boats loaded with vegetables were arriving and unloading. Peasants were building cabbages into pyramids; collective squashes and cucumbers were taking a picturesque shape; wreaths of garlic and garlands of onions

hocks as I went home; the swelling tide of life filled the streets, and brought Venice back to my day-time remembrance, robbing her of that keen, delightful charm with which she had greeted my early morning sense.

X. THE MOUSE

FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE MOUSE — THE APPEAL OF HIS WRETCHEDNESS — YIELDING TO TEMPTATION — PENALTY OF A GOOD ACTION.

WISHING to tell the story of our Mouse, because I think it illustrates some amusing traits of character in a certain class of Italians, I explain at once that he was not a mouse, but a man, so called from his wretched, trembling little manner, his fugitive expression and peaked visage.

I

HE first appeared to us on the driver's seat of that carriage in which we posted so splendidly one spring-time from Padua to Ponte Lagoscuro. But though he mounted to his place just outside the city gate, we did not regard him much, nor, indeed, observe what a mouse he was, until the driver stopped to water his horses near Battaglia, and the Mouse got down to stretch his forlorn little legs. Then I got down, too, and bade him good-day, and told him it was a very hot day, — for he was a mouse apparently so plunged in wretchedness that I doubted if he knew what kind of day it was.

When I had spoken, he began to praise (in the wary manner of the Venetians when they find themselves in the company of a foreigner who does not look like an Englishman) the Castle of the Obizzi near by, which is

now the country-seat of the ex-Duke of Modena; and he presently said something to imply that he thought me a German.

"But I am not a German," said I.

"So many excuses," said the Mouse sadly, but with evident relief; and then began to talk more freely, and of the evil times.

"Are you going all the way with us to Florence?" I asked.

"No, signor, to Bologna; from there to Ancona."

"Have you ever been in Venice? We are just coming from there."

"Oh, yes."

"It is a beautiful place. Do you like it?"

"Sufficiently. But one does not enjoy himself very well there."

"But I thought Venice interesting,"

"Sufficiently, signor. *Ma!*" the Mouse said, shrugging his shoulders, and putting on the air of being luxuriously fastidious in his choice of cities, "the water is so bad in Venice."

The Mouse is dressed in a heavy winter overcoat, and has no garment to form a compromise with his shirt-sleeves, if he should wish to render the weather more endurable by throwing off the surtout. In spite of his momentary assumption of consequence, I suspect that his coat is in the Monte di Pietà. It comes out directly that he is a ship-carpenter who has worked in the Arsenal of Venice, and at the shipyards in Trieste.

But there is no work any more. He went to Trieste

lately to get a job on the three frigates which the Sultan had ordered to be built there. *Ma!* After all, the frigates are to be built in Marseilles instead. There is nothing. And everything is so dear. In Venetia you spend much and gain little. Perhaps there is work at Ancona.

By this time the horses are watered; the Mouse regains his seat, and we almost forget him, till he jumps from his place, just before we reach the hotel in Rovigo, and disappears — down the first hole in the side of a house, perhaps. He might have done much worse, and spent the night at the hotel, as we did.

II

THE next morning at four o'clock, when we start, he is on the box again, nibbling bread and cheese, and glancing furtively back at us to say good-morning. He has little twinkling black eyes, just like a mouse, and a sharp mustache, and sharp tuft on his chin — as like Victor Emmanuel's as a mouse's tuft can be.

The cold morning air seems to shrivel him, and he crouches into a little gelid ball on the seat beside the driver, while we wind along the Po on the smooth gray road; while the twilight lifts slowly from the distances of field and vineyard; while the black boats of the Po, with their gaunt white sails, show spectrally through the mists; while the trees and the bushes break into innumerable voice, and the birds are glad of another day in Italy; while the peasant drives his mellow-eyed, dun oxen afield; while his wife comes in her scarlet

bodice to the door, and the children's faces peer out from behind her skirts; while the air freshens, the east flushes, and the great miracle is wrought anew.

Once again, before we reach the ferry of the Po, the Mouse leaps down and disappears as mysteriously as at Rovigo. We see him no more till we meet in the station on the other side of the river, where we hear him bargaining long and earnestly with the ticket-seller for a third-class passage to Bologna. He fails to get it, I think, at less than the usual rate, for he retires from the contest more shrunken and forlorn than before, and walks up and down the station, startled at a word, trembling at any sudden noise.

For curiosity, I ask how much he paid for crossing the river, mentioning the fabulous sum it had cost us.

It appears that he paid sixteen soldi only. "What could they do when a man was in misery? I had nothing else."

Even while thus betraying his poverty the Mouse did not beg, and we began to respect his poverty. In a little while we pitied it, witnessing the manner in which he sat down on the edge of a chair, with a smile of meek desperation.

It is a more serious case when an artisan is out of work in the Old World than one can understand in the New. There the struggle for bread is so fierce and the competition so great; and, then, a man bred to one trade cannot turn his hand to another, as in America. Even the rudest and least skilled labor has more people to perform it than are wanted. The Italians are very

good to the poor, but the tradesman out of work must become a beggar before charity can help him.

III

WE, who are poor enough to be wise, consult foolishly together concerning the Mouse. It blesses him that gives and him that takes, — this business of charity. And then, there is something irresistibly relishing and splendid in the consciousness of being the instrument of a special providence! Have I all my life admired those beneficent characters in novels and comedies who rescue innocence, succor distress, and go about pressing gold into the palm of poverty, and telling it to take it and be happy; and now shall I reject an occasion, made to my hand, for emulating them in real life?

"I think I will give the Mouse five francs," I say.

"Yes, certainly."

"But I will be prudent," I continue. "I will not *give* him this money. I will tell him it is a loan which he may pay me back again whenever he can. In this way I shall relieve him now, and furnish him an incentive to economy."

I call to the Mouse, and he runs tremulously toward me.

"Have you friends in Ancona?"

"No, signor."

"How much money have you left?"

He shows me three soldi. "Enough for a coffee."

"And then?"

"God knows."

So I give him the five francs, and explain my little scheme of making it a loan, and not a gift; and then I give him my address.

He does not appear to understand the scheme of the loan; but he takes the money, and is quite stunned by his good fortune. He thanks me absently, and goes and shows the piece to the guards with a smile that illumines and transfigures his whole person. At Bologna, he has come to his senses; he loads me with blessings, he is ready to weep; he reverences me, he wishes me a good voyage, endless prosperity, and innumerable days; and takes the train for Ancona.

"Ah, ah!" I congratulate myself. "Is it not a fine thing to be the instrument of a special providence?"

It is pleasant to think of the Mouse during all that journey, and if we are ever so tired, it rests us to say, "I wonder where the Mouse is by this time?" When we get home, and coldly count up our expenses, we rejoice in the five francs lent to the Mouse. "And I know he will pay it back if ever he can," I say. "That was a Mouse of integrity."

IV

TWO weeks later appears a comely young woman, with a young child, — a child strong on its legs, a child which tries to open everything in the room, which wants to pull the cloth off the table, to throw itself out of the open window,—a child of which I have never seen the peer for restlessness and curiosity. The young woman has been directed to call on me as a person likely to pay her way to Ferrara.

"But who sent you? But, in fine, why should I pay your way to Ferrara? I have never seen you before."

"My husband, whom you benefited on his way to Ancona, sent me. Here is his letter and the card you gave him."

I call out to my fellow-victim, "My dear, here is news of the Mouse!"

"Don't *tell* me he's sent you that money already!"

"Not at all. He has sent me his wife and child, that I may forward them to him at Ferrara, out of my goodness, and the boundless prosperity which has followed his good wishes, — I, who am a great signor in his eyes, and an insatiable giver of five-franc pieces, — the instrument of a perpetual special providence. The Mouse has found work at Ferrara, and his wife comes here from Trieste. As for the rest, I am to send her to him, as I said."

"You are deceived," I say solemnly to the Mouse's wife. "I am not a rich man. I lent your husband five francs because he had nothing. I am sorry: but I cannot spare twenty florins to send you to Ferrara. If *one* will help you?"

"Thanks the same," said the young woman, who was well dressed enough; and blessed me, and gathered up her child, and went her way.

But her blessing did not lighten my heart, depressed and troubled by so strange an end to my little scheme of a beneficent loan. After all, perhaps the Mouse may have been as keenly disappointed as myself. With the ineradicable belief of the Italians, that persons who

speak English are wealthy by nature, and *tutti originali*, it was not such an absurd conception of the case to suppose that if I had lent him five francs once, I should like to do it continually. Perhaps he may yet pay back the loan with usury. But I doubt it. In the mean time, I am far from blaming the Mouse. I merely feel that there is a misunderstanding, which I can pardon if he can.

XI. CHURCHES AND PICTURES

DIFFICULTIES OF THE HUMBLE-MINDED OBSERVER — CONTRARIETIES OF RUSKIN — IGNORANT PLEASURE IN THE BEAUTY OF ST. MARK'S — VOTIVE OFFERINGS AND CHURCHES: THE SALUTE, SAN GIOVANNI E PAOLO — CLOISTERS OF SAN STEFANO — CHURCH CATS AND QUAINT EFFECTS.

IT is the sad fortune of him who desires to arrive at full perception of the true and beautiful in art, to find that critics have no agreement except upon a few loose general principles; and that among the artists, to whom he turns in his despair, no two think alike concerning the same master, while his own little learning has made him distrust his natural likings and mislikings. Ruskin is undoubtedly the best guide you can have in your study of the Venetian painters; and after reading him, and suffering confusion and ignominy from his theories and egotisms, the exercises by which you are chastised into admitting that he has taught you anything cannot fail to end in a humility very favorable to your future as a Christian. But even in this subdued state you must distrust the methods by which he pretends to relate the æsthetic truths you perceive to certain civil and religious conditions: you scarcely understand how Tintoretto, who genteelly disdains (on one page) to paint well any person baser than a saint or senator, and with whom "exactly in proportion to the

dignity of the character is the beauty of the painting," comes (on the next page) to paint a very "weak, mean, and painful" figure of Christ; and knowing a little the loose lives of the great Venetian painters, you must reject, with several other humorous postulates, the idea that good colorists are better men than bad colorists. Without any guide, I think, these painters may be studied and understood, up to a certain point, by one who lives in the atmosphere of their art at Venice, and who, insensibly breathing its influence, acquires a feeling for it which all the critics in the world could not impart where the works themselves are not to be seen. I am sure that no one strange to the profession of artist ever received a just notion of any picture by reading the most accurate and faithful description of it: stated dimensions fail to convey ideas of size; adjectives are not adequate to the ideas of movement; and the names of the colors, however artfully and vividly introduced and repeated, cannot tell the reader of a painter's coloring. I should be glad to hear what Titian's "Assumption" is like from some one who knew it by descriptions. Can any one who has seen it tell its likeness, or forget it? Can any cunning critic describe intelligibly the difference between the styles of Titian, of Tintoretto, and of Paolo Veronese, — that difference which no one with the slightest feeling for art can fail to discern after looking thrice at their works? It results from all this that I must believe special criticisms on art to have their small use only in the presence of the works they discuss. This is my sincere belief, and I could not, in any hon-

esty, lumber my pages with descriptions or speculations which would be idle to most readers, even if I were a far wiser judge of art than I affect to be. As it is, doubting if I am gifted in that way at all, I think I may better devote myself to discussion of such things in Venice as can be understood by comparison with things elsewhere, and so rest happy in the thought that I have thrown no additional darkness on any of the pictures half obscured now by the religious dimness of the Venetian churches.

I

DOUBT akin to that expressed has already made me hesitate to spend the reader's patience upon many well-known wonders of Venice; and, looking back over the preceding chapters, I find that some of the principal edifices of the city have scarcely got into my book even by name. It is possible that the reader, after all, loses nothing by this; but I should regret it, if it seemed ingratitude to that expression of the beautiful which beguiled many dull hours for me, and kept me company in many lonesome ones. For kindnesses of this sort, indeed, I am under obligations to edifices in every part of the city; and there is hardly a bit of sculptured stone in the Ducal Palace to which I do not owe some pleasant thought or harmless fancy. Yet I am shy of endeavoring, in my gratitude, to transmute the substance of the Ducal Palace into some substance that shall be sensible to the eyes that look on this print; and I forgive myself the reluctance the more readily when I remember how, just after reading Mr. Ruskin's descrip-

tion of St. Mark's Church, I, who had seen it every day for three years, began to have dreadful doubts of its existence.

To be sure, this was only for a moment, and I do not think all the descriptive talent in the world could make me again doubt St. Mark's, which I remember with no less love than veneration. This church indeed has a beauty which touches and wins the heart, while it appeals profoundly to the religious sentiment. It is as if there were a sheltering friendliness in its low-hovering domes and arches; as if here, where the meek soul feels welcome and protection, the spirit oppressed with sin might creep nearest to forgiveness, in the temple's cavernous recesses, faintly starred with mosaic, and twilighted by twinkling altar-lamps.

Though the church is enriched with incalculable value of stone and sculpture, I cannot remember at any time to have been struck by its mere opulence. There is such unity and fitness in the solemn splendor, that wonder is scarcely appealed to. Even the priceless and rarely seen treasures of the church — such as the famous golden altar-piece, whose costly blaze of gems and gold was lighted in Constantinople six hundred years ago — failed to impress me with their pecuniary worth, though I

> "Value the giddy pleasure of the eyes,"

and like to marvel at precious things. The jewels of other churches are conspicuous and silly heaps of value; but St. Mark's, where every line of space shows delicate labor in rich material, subdues the jewels to their place

and I think the perfume, as it steals mitigated to your nostrils, out of the open church door, is the most reverend smell in the world.

The music in Venetian churches is not commonly very good; the best is to be heard at St. Mark's, though the director of the choir always contrives to make such a slapping with his *bâton* as nearly to spoil your enjoyment. The great musical event of the year is the performance (immediately after the Festa del Redentore) of the Soldini Masses. These are offered for the repose of one Giuseppe Soldini of Verona, who, dying possessed of about a million francs, bequeathed a part (some six thousand francs) annually to the church of St. Mark, on conditions named in his will. The terms are, that during three successive days, every year, there shall be said for the peace of his soul a certain number of masses, — all to be done in the richest and costliest manner. In case of delinquency, the bequest passes to the Philharmonic Society of Milan; but the priesthood of the basilica so strictly regard the wishes of the deceased that they never say less than four masses over and above the prescribed number. After hearing these masses, curiosity led me to visit the Casa di Ricovero, in order to look at Soldini's will, and there I had the pleasure of recognizing the constantly recurring fact that beneficent humanity is of all countries and religions. The Casa di Ricovero is an immense edifice dedicated to the shelter and support of the decrepit and helpless of either sex, who are collected in it to the number of five hundred. The more modern quarter was erected from a

bequest by Soldini; and eternal provision is also made by his will for ninety of the inmates. The Secretary of the Casa went through all the wards and infirmaries with me, and everywhere I saw cleanliness and comfort (and such content as is possible to sickness and old age) without surprise; for I had before seen the Civil Hospital of Venice, and knew something of the perfection of Venetian charities.

At last we came to the wardrobe, where the clothes of the pensioners are made and kept. Here we were attended by a little, slender, pallid young nun, who exhibited the dresses with a simple pride altogether pathetic. She was a woman still, poor thing, though a nun, and she could not help loving new clothes. They called her Madre, who would never be it except in name and motherly tenderness. When we had seen all, she stood a moment before us, and as one of the coarse woolen lappets of her cape had hidden it, she drew out a heavy crucifix of gold, and placed it in sight, with a heavenly little ostentation, over her heart. An angel could have done it without harm, but she blushed repentance, and glided away with downcast eyes.

II

IN St. Mark's, where the sublimity of the primitive faith seems to lay a transfiguring spell upon the present, there are none of these shows of mistaken piety which meet you elsewhere. For some notion of these you may go into the Church of the Carmelites, for instance, where there is a Madonna with the Child, elevated

breast-high to the worshipers, and crowned with tinsel and garlanded with paper flowers; she has a blue ribbon about her tightly corseted waist; and she wears an immense spreading hoop. On her painted face of wood, with its staring eyes shadowed by a wig, is figured a set smile; and people come constantly and kiss the cross that hangs by a chain from her girdle, and utter their prayers to her; while the column near which she sits is hung over with pictures celebrating the miracles she has performed.

These votive pictures, indeed, are to be seen on most altars of the Virgin; but that Virgin who, in all her portraits, is dressed in a churn-shaped gown, and who holds a Child similarly attired, is the Madonna most efficacious in cases of dreadful accident and hopeless sickness, if we may trust the pictures which represent her interference. You see a carriage overturned and dragged along the ground by frantic horses, and the fashionably dressed lady and gentleman in the carriage about to be dashed into millions of pieces, when the havoc is instantly arrested by this Madonna, who breaks the clouds, leaving them with jagged and shattered edges, like broken panes of glass, and visibly holds back the fashionable lady and gentleman from destruction. It is the fashionable lady and gentleman who have thus recorded their obligation; and it is the mother, doubtless, of the little boy miraculously preserved from death in his fall from the second-floor balcony, who has gratefully caused the miracle to be painted and hung at the Madonna's shrine. Now and then you also find

offerings of corn and fruits before her altar, in acknowledgment of good crops which the Madonna has made to grow; and again you find rows of silver hearts, typical of the sinful hearts which her intercession has caused to be purged. The greatest number of these, at any one shrine, is to be seen in the church of San Nicolò dei Tolentini, where I should think there were three hundred.

Whatever may be the popularity of the Madonna della Salute in pestilent times, I do not take it to be very great when the health of the city is good, if I may judge from the sparseness of the worshipers in the church of her name. It is true that on the annual holiday commemorative of her interposition to save Venice from the plague, there is an immense concourse of people there; but at other times I found the masses and vespers slenderly attended, and I did not observe a great number of votive offerings in the temple, though the great silver lamp placed there by the city, in memory of the Madonna's goodness during the visitation of the cholera in 1849, may be counted, perhaps, as representative of much collective gratitude. It is a cold, superb church, lording it over the noblest breadth of the Grand Canal; with its twin bell-towers and single massive dome, its majestic breadth of steps rising from the water's edge, and the many-statued sculpture of its façade. Strangers go there to see the splendor of its high altar (where the melodramatic Madonna, as the centre of a marble group, responds to the prayer of the operatic Venice, and drives away the theatrical Pest),

and the excellent Titians and the grand Tintoretto in the sacristy.

The Salute is one of the great show-churches, like that of San Giovanni e Paolo, which the common poverty of imagination has decided to call the Venetian Westminster Abbey, because it contains many famous tombs and monuments. But there is only one Westminster Abbey; and I am so far a believer in the perfectibility of our species as to suppose that vergers are nowhere possible but in England. There would be nothing to say, after Mr. Ruskin, in praise or blame of the great monuments in San Giovanni e Paolo, even if I cared to discuss them; I only wonder that, in speaking of the bad art which produced the tomb of the Venieri, he failed to mention the successful approach to its depraved feeling, made by the single figure sitting on the base of a slender shaft at the side of the first altar, on the right of the main entrance. I suppose this figure typifies Grief, but it really represents a drunken woman, whose drapery has fallen, as if in some vile debauch, to her waist, and who broods, with a horrible, heavy stupor and chopfallen vacancy, on something which she supports with her left hand upon her knee. It is a circle of marble, and if you have the daring to peer under the arm of the debauchee, and look at it as she does, you find that it contains the bass-relief of a skull in bronze.

I have looked again and again at nearly every painting of note in Venice, having a foolish shame to miss a single one, and having also a better wish to learn something of the beautiful from them; but at last

I must say, that, while I wondered at the greatness of some, and tried to wonder at the greatness of others, the only paintings which gave me genuine and hearty pleasure were those of Bellini, Carpaccio, and a few others of that school and time.

III

EVERY day we used to pass through the court of the old Augustinian convent adjourning the church of San Stefano. It is a long time since the monks were driven out of their snug hold; and the convent is now the headquarters of the Austrian engineer corps, and the colonnade surrounding the court has become a public thoroughfare. On one wall of this court are the remains — very shadowy remains — of frescoes painted by Pordenone at the period of his fiercest rivalry with Titian; and it is said that Pordenone, while he wrought upon the scenes of scriptural story here represented, wore his sword and buckler, in readiness to repel an attack which he feared from his competitor. The story is vague, and I hunted it down in divers authorities only to find it grow more and more intangible and uncertain. But it gave a singular relish to our daily walk through the old cloister, and I added, for my own pleasure (and chiefly out of my own fancy, I am afraid, for I can nowhere localize the fable on which I built), that the rivalry between the painters was partly a love-jealousy, and that the disputed object of their passion was that fair Violante, daughter of the elder Palma, who is to be seen in so many pictures painted by her father, and by her

lover, Titian. No doubt there are readers who will care less for this idleness of mine than for the fact that the hard-headed German monk, Martin Luther, once said mass in the adjoining church of San Stefano, and lodged in the convent, on his way to Rome. The unhappy Francesco Carrara, the last Lord of Padua, is buried in this church; but Venetians are chiefly interested there now by the homilies of those fervent preacher-monks, who deliver powerful sermons during Lent. The monks are gifted men, with earnest and graceful eloquence, and they attract immense audiences, like popular ministers among ourselves. It is a fashion to hear them, and although the atmosphere of the churches in the season of Lent is raw, damp, and uncomfortable, the Venetians then throng the churches where they preach. After Lent the sermons and church-going cease, and the sanctuaries are once more abandoned to the priests, droning from the altars to the scattered kneelers on the floor,— the foul old women and the young girls of the poor, the old-fashioned old gentlemen and devout ladies of the better class, and that singular race of poverty-stricken old men proper to Italian churches, who, having dabbled themselves with holy water, wander forlornly and aimlessly about, and seem to consort with the foreigners looking at the objects of interest. Lounging young fellows of low degree appear with their caps in their hands, long enough to tap themselves upon the breast and nod recognition to the high altar; and lounging young fellows of high degree step in to glance at the faces of the pretty girls, and then vanish. The dron-

ing ends presently, and the devotees disappear, the last to go being that thin old woman, kneeling before a shrine, with a grease-gray shawl falling from her head to the ground. The sacristan, in his perennial enthusiasm about the great picture of the church, almost treads upon her as he brings the strangers to see it, and she gets meekly up and begs of them in a bated whimper. The sacristan gradually expels her with the visitors, and at one o'clock locks the door and goes home.

IV

By chance I have got a fine effect in churches at the five o'clock mass in the morning, when the worshipers are nearly all peasants who have come to market, and who are pretty sure, each one, to have a bundle or basket. At this hour the sacristan is heavy with sleep; he dodges uncertainly at the tapers as he lights and quenches them; and his manner to the congregation, as he passes through it to the altar, is altogether rasped and nervous. I think it is best to be one's self a little sleepy, — when the barefooted friar at the altar (if it is in the church of the Scalzi, say) has a habit of getting several centuries back from you, and saying mass to the patrician ghosts from the tombs under your feet; and there is nothing at all impossible in the benign angels and cherubs in marble, floating and fatly tumbling about on the broken arches of the altars.

I have sometimes been puzzled in Venice to know why churches should keep cats, church-mice being proverbially so poor, and so little capable of sustaining a

cat in good condition; yet I have repeatedly found sleek and portly cats in the churches, where they seem to be on terms of perfect understanding with the priests, and to have no quarrel even with the little boys who assist at mass. There is, for instance, a cat in the sacristy of the Frari, which I have often seen in friendly association with the ecclesiastics there, when they came into his room to robe or disrobe, or warm their hands, numb with supplication, at the great brazier in the middle of the floor. I do not think this cat has the slightest interest in the lovely Madonna of Bellini which hangs in the sacristy; but I suspect him of dreadful knowledge concerning the tombs in the church. I have no doubt he has passed through the open door of Canova's monument, and that he sees some coherence and meaning in Titian's; he has been all over the great mausoleum of the Doge Pesaro, and he knows whether the griffins descend from their perches at the midnight hour to bite the naked knees of the ragged black caryatides. This profound and awful animal I take to be a blood relation of the cat in the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, who sleeps like a Christian during service, and loves a certain glorious bed on the top of a bench, where the sun strikes upon him through the great painted window, and dapples his tawny coat with lovely purples and crimsons.

The church cats are apparently the friends of the sacristans, with whom their amity is maintained probably by entire cession of the spoils of visitors. Of these, therefore, they seldom take any notice, merely

opening a lazy eye now and then to wink at the sacristans as they drag the deluded strangers from altar to altar, with intense enjoyment of the absurdity, and a wicked satisfaction in the incredible stories rehearsed. I fancy, being Italian cats, they feel something like a national antipathy toward those troops of German tourists, who always seek the Sehenswürdigkeiten in companies of ten or twenty,—the men wearing their beards, and the women their hoops and hats, to look as much like English people as possible; while their valet marshals them forward with a stream of guttural information, unbroken by a single punctuation point. These wise cats know the real English by their "Murrays;" and I think they make a shrewd guess at the nationality of us Americans by the speed with which we pass from one thing to another, and by our national ignorance of all languages but English. They must also hear us vaunt the superiority of our own land in unpleasant comparisons, and I do not think they believe us, or like us, for our boasting. I am sure they would say to us, if they could, "*Quando finirà mai quella guerra? Che sangue! che orrore!*" ("When will this war ever be ended? What blood! What horror!" I have often heard the question and the comment from many Italians who were not cats.) The French tourist they distinguish by his evident skepticism concerning his own wisdom in quitting Paris for the present purpose; and the traveling Italian, by his attention to his badly dressed, handsome wife, with whom he is now making his wedding trip.

V

I HAVE found churches undergoing repairs (as most of them always are in Venice) rather interesting. Under these circumstances, the sacristan is obliged to take you into all sorts of secret places and odd corners, to show you the objects of interest; and you may often get glimpses of pictures which, if they were not removed from their proper places, it would be impossible to see. The carpenters and masons work most deliberately, as if in a place so set against progress that speedy workmanship would be a kind of impiety. Besides the mechanics, there are always idle priests standing about, and vagabond boys clambering over the scaffolding. In San Giovanni e Paolo I remember we one day saw a small boy appear through an opening in the roof, and descend by means of some hundred feet of dangling rope. The spectacle, which made us ache with fear, delighted his companions so much that their applause was scarcely subdued by the sacred character of the place. As soon as he reached the ground in safety, a gentle, good-natured-looking priest took him by the arm and cuffed his ears.

XII. SOME ISLANDS OF THE LAGOONS

SOME ISLAND CHURCHES AND THEIR SCULPTURES — SAN GIORGIO MAGGIORE — THE LIDO AND ITS MEMORIES, ITS FORTRESSES AND FIELDS AND VILLAGES — AN EXCURSION TO TORCELLO, BY WAY OF MURANO — INCIDENTS AND OBJECTS OF INTEREST AT TORCELLO, WITH THE WISE CONCLUSION OF THE FLOWER OF SERVING-WOMEN — CHIOGGIA AND ITS INGENUOUS INHABITANTS.

NOTHING can be fairer to the eye than those "summer isles of Eden" lying all about Venice, far and near. The water forever trembles and changes, with every change of light, from one rainbow glory to another; and even when the splendid tides recede, and go down with the sea, they leave a heritage of beauty to the empurpled mud of the shallows, strewn with green, disheveled seaweed. The lagoons have almost as wide a bound as your vision. On the east and west you can see their borders of seashore and mainland; but looking north and south, there seems no end to the charm of their vast, smooth, all but melancholy expanses. Beyond their southern limit rise the blue Euganean Hills, where Petrarch died; on the north loom the Alps, white with snow. Dotting the stretches of lagoon in every direction lie the islands — now piles of airy architecture that the water seems to float under and bear upon its breast, now

"Sunny spots of greenery,"

with the bell-towers of demolished cloisters spectrally showing above their trees; for in the days of the Republic nearly every one of the islands had its monastery and its church. At present the greater number have been fortified by the Austrians, whose sentinel paces the once peaceful shores, and challenges all passers with his sharp "*Halt! Wer da!*" and warns them not to approach too closely. Other islands have been devoted to different utilitarian purposes, and few are able to keep their distant promises of loveliness. One of the more faithful is the island of San Clemente, on which the old convent church is yet standing, empty and forlorn within, but without all draped in glossy ivy. After I had learned to row in the gondolier fashion, I voyaged much in the lagoon with my boat, and often stopped at this church. It has a curious feature in the chapel of the Madonna di Loreto, which is built in the middle of the nave, faced with marble, roofed, and isolated from the walls of the main edifice on all sides. On the back of this there is a bass-relief in bronze, representing the Nativity, — a work much in the spirit of the bass-reliefs in San Giovanni e Paolo; and one of the chapels has an exquisite little altar, with gleaming columns of porphyry. There has been no service in the church for many years; and this altar had a strangely pathetic effect, won from the black four-cornered cap of a priest that lay before it, like an offering. I wondered who the priest was that wore it, and why he had left it there, as if he had fled away in haste. The gondolier who was with me took it up and reviled it as representative of *birbanti matricolati*,

who fed upon the poor, and in whose expulsion from that island he rejoiced. But he had little reason to do so, since the last use of the place was for the imprisonment of refractory ecclesiastics. Some of the tombs of the Morosini are in San Clemente, — villainous monuments, with bronze Deaths popping out of apertures, and holding marble scrolls inscribed with undying deeds. Nearly all the decorations of the poor old church are horrible, and there is one statue in it meant for an angel, with the most lascivious face ever put in marble.

I

THE islands near Venice are small, except the Giudecca (which is properly a part of the city), the Lido, and Murano. The Giudecca, from being anciently the bounds in which certain factious nobles were confined, was later laid out in pleasure gardens, and built up with summer palaces. The gardens still remain to some extent; but they are now chiefly turned to practical account in raising vegetables and fruits for the Venetian market, and the palaces have been converted into warehouses and factories. This island produces a variety of beggar, the most tenacious in all Venice, and it has a convent of Capuchin friars, who are likewise beggars. To them belongs the church of the Redentore, with the Madonnas of Bellini in the sacristy.

At the eastern extremity of the Giudecca lies the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, with Palladio's church of that name. There are some great Tintorettos in the church, and beautiful wood-carvings in the choir. The

island has a sad interest from the political prison into which part of the old convent has been perverted; and the next island eastward is the scarcely sadder abode of the mad. Then comes the fair and happy seat of Armenian learning and piety, San Lazzaro, and then the Lido.

The Lido is the seashore, and thither in more cheerful days the Venetians used to resort in great numbers on certain holidays, called the Mondays of the Lido, to enjoy the sea-breeze and the country scenery, and to lunch upon the flat tombs of the Hebrews, buried there in exile from the consecrated Christian ground. On a summer's day the sun glares down upon the sand and flat gravestones, and it seems the most desolate place where one's bones could be laid. The Protestants were once also interred on the Lido, but now they rest (apart from the Catholics, however) in the cemetery of San Michele.

The island is long and narrow: it stretches between the lagoons and the sea, with a village at either end, and with bath-houses on the beach, which is everywhere faced with forts. There are some poor little trees there, and grass, — things which we were thrice a week grateful for, when we went thither to bathe. I do not know whether it will give the place further interest to say that it was among the tombs of the Hebrews that Cooper's ingenious Bravo had the incredible good luck to hide himself from the *sbirri* of the Republic; or to relate that it was the habit of Lord Byron to gallop up and down the Lido in search of the conspicuous solitude of which he was fond.

II

ONE day of the first summer I spent in Venice (three years of Venetian life afterward removed it back into times of the remotest antiquity), a friend and I had the now incredible enterprise to walk from one end of the Lido to the other, from the port of San Nicolò (through which the Bucintoro passed when the Doges went to espouse the Adriatic) to the port of Malamocco, at the southern extremity.

We began with that delicious bath which you may have in the Adriatic, where the light surf breaks with a pensive cadence on the sand, all strewn with brilliant shells. The Adriatic is the bluest water I have ever seen; and it is a lazy delight to lie and watch the fishing sails of purple and yellow dotting its surface, and the greater ships dipping down its utmost rim. It was particularly good to do this after coming out of the water; but our American blood could not brook much repose, and we got up presently, and started on our walk to the little village of Malamocco, some three miles away. The double-headed eagle keeps watch and ward from a continuous line of forts along the shore, and the white-coated sentinels never cease to pace the bastions, night or day. Their vision of the sea must not be interrupted by even so much as the form of a stray passer; and as we went by the forts, we had to descend from the sea-wall, and walk under it, until we got beyond the sentry's beat. The crimson poppies grow everywhere on this sandy little isle, and they fringe the edges of the

bastions with their bloom, as if the "blood-red blossom of war" had there sprung from the seeds of battle sown in old forgotten fights. But otherwise the forts were not very engaging in appearance. A sentry-box of yellow and black, a sentry, a row of seaward frowning cannon — there was not much in all this to interest us; and so we walked idly along, and looked either to the city rising from the lagoons on one hand, or to the ships going down the sea on the other. In the fields, along the road, were vines and Indian corn; but instead of those effigies of humanity, doubly fearful from their wide unlikeness to anything human, which we contrive to scare away the birds, the devout peasant-folks had here displayed on poles the instruments of the Passion of the Lord, — the hammer, the cords, the nails, — which at once protected and blessed the fields. The fields were well cultivated, and the vines and garden vegetables looked flourishing; but the corn was spindling, and had, I thought, a homesick look, as if it dreamed vainly of wide ancestral bottom-lands, on the mighty streams that run through the heart of the Great West. The Italians call our corn *gran turco;* but I knew that it was for the West that it yearned, and not for the East.

No doubt there were once finer dwellings than the peasants' houses which are now the only habitations on the Lido; and I suspect that a genteel villa must formerly have stood near the farm-gate, which we found surmounted by broken statues of Venus and Diana. The poor goddesses were both headless, and some cruel fortune had struck off their hands, and they

looked strangely forlorn in the swaggering attitudes of the absurd period of art to which they belonged: they extended their mutilated arms toward the sea for pity, but it regarded them not; and we passed before them scoffing at their bad taste, for we were hungry, and it was yet some distance to Malamocco.

This dirty little village was the capital of the Venetian islands before King Pepin and his Franks burned it, and the shifting sands of empire gathered solidly about the Rialto in Venice. It is a thousand years since that time, and Malamocco has long been given over to fishermen's families and the soldiers of the forts. There is a church at Malamocco, but it was closed, and we could not find the sacristan; so we went to the little restaurant, as the next best place, and demanded something to eat. What had the padrone? He answered pretty much to the same effect as the innkeeper in "Don Quixote," who told his guests that they could have anything that walked on the earth, or swam in the sea, or flew in the air. We would take, then, some fish, or a bit of veal, or some mutton chops. The padrone sweetly shrugged the shoulders of apology. There was nothing of all this, but what would we say to some liver or gizzards of chickens, fried upon the instant and ready the next breath? No, we did not want them; so we compromised on some ham fried in batter of eggs, and reeking with its own fatness. It was a very bad little lunch, and nothing redeemed it but the amiability of the smiling padrone and the bustling padrona, who served us as kings and princes. It was a clean hostelry,

though, and that was a merit in Malamocco, of which the chief modern virtue is that it cannot hold you long. No doubt it was more interesting in other times. In the days when the Venetians chose it for their capital, it was a walled town, and fortified with towers. It has been more than once inundated by the sea, and it might again be washed out with advantage.

III

IN the spring, two years after my visit to Malamocco, we people in Casa Falier made a long-intended expedition to the island of Torcello, which is perhaps the most interesting of the islands of the lagoons. We had talked of it all winter, and had acquired enough property there to put up some light Spanish castles on the desolate site of the ancient city, that, so many years ago, sickened of the swamp air and died. A Count from Torcello is the title which Venetian persiflage gives to improbable noblemen; and thus even the pride of the dead Republic of Torcello has passed into matter of scornful jest.

When we leave the riva of Casa Falier, we pass down the Grand Canal, cross the Basin of St. Mark, and enter one of the narrow canals that intersect the Riva degli Schiavoni, whence we wind and deviate southwestward till we emerge near the church of San Giovanni e Paolo, on the Fondamenta Nuovi. On our way we notice that a tree, hanging over the water from a little garden, is in full leaf, and at Murano we see the tender bloom of peaches and the drifted blossom of cherry trees.

As we go by the cemetery of San Michele, Piero the gondolier and Giovanna improve us with a little solemn pleasantry.

"It is a small place," says Piero, "but there is room enough for all Venice in it."

"It is true," assents Giovanna, "and here we poor folks become landholders at last."

At Murano we stop a moment to look at the old Duomo, and to enjoy its quaint mosaics within, and the fine and graceful spirit of the apse without. It is very old, this architecture; but the eternal youth of the beautiful belongs to it, and there is scarce a stone fallen from it that I would replace.

The manufacture of glass at Murano, of which the origin is so remote, may be said to form the only branch of industry which still flourishes in the lagoons. Muranese beads are exported to all quarters in vast quantities, and the process of making them is one of the things that strangers feel they must see when visiting Venice. The famous mirrors are no longer made, and the glass has deteriorated in quality, as well as in the beauty of the thousand curious forms it took. The test of the old glass, which is now imitated a great deal, is its extreme lightness. I suppose the charming notion that glass was once wrought at Murano of such fineness that it burst into fragments if poison were poured into it, must be fabulous.

The city of Murano has dwindled from thirty to five thousand in population. It is intersected by a system of canals like Venice, and has a Grand Canal of its own,

of as stately breadth as that of the capital. The finer houses are built on this canal; but the beautiful palaces, once occupied in *villeggiatura* by the noble Venetians, are now inhabited by herds of poor, or converted into glass-works. The famous Cardinal Bembo and other literati made the island their retreat, and beautified it with gardens and fountains. Casa Priuli in that day was, according to Venetian ideas, "a terrestrial Paradise," and a proper haunt of "nymphs and demi-gods." But the wealth, the learning, and the elegance of former times, which planted "groves of Academe" at Murano, have passed away, and the fair pleasure-gardens are now weed-grown wastes, or turned into cabbage and potato patches. It is a poor, dreary little town, with an inexplicable charm in its decay. The city arms are still displayed upon the public buildings (for Murano was ruled, independently of Venice, by its own council); and the heraldic cock, with a snake in its beak, has yet a lusty and haughty air amid the ruin of the place.

The way in which the spring made itself felt upon the lagoon was full of curious delight. It was not so early in the season that we should know the spring by the first raw warmth in the air, and there was as yet no assurance of her presence in the growth—later so luxuriant—of the coarse grasses of the shallows. But somehow the spring was there, giving us new life with every breath. There were fewer gulls than usual, and those we saw sailed far overhead, debating departure. There was deeper languor in the laziness of the soldiers of finance, as they lounged and slept upon their floating custom-

houses in every channel of the lagoons; and the hollow voices of the boatmen, yelling to each other as their wont is, had an uncommon tendency to diffuse themselves in echo. Over all, the heavens had put on their summer blue, in promise of that delicious weather which in the lagoons lasts half the year, and which makes every other climate seem niggard of sunshine and azure skies. I know we have beautiful days at home, — days of which the sumptuous splendor used to take my memory with unspeakable longing and regret even in Italy, — but we do not have, week after week, month after month, that

"Blue, unclouded weather,"

which, at Venice, contents all your senses, and makes you exult to be alive with the inarticulate gladness of children, or of the swallows that all day wheel and dart through the air, and shriek out a delight too intense and precipitate for song.

IV

THE island of Torcello is some five miles away from Venice, in the northern lagoon. The city was founded far back in the troubled morning of Christian civilization, by refugees from barbarian invasion, and built with stones quarried from the ruins of old Altinum, over which Attila had passed desolating. During the first ages of its existence Torcello enjoyed the doubtful advantage of protection from the Greek emperors, but fell afterward under the domination of Venice. In the thirteenth century the silt of the river that emptied into the lagoon

there began to choke up the wholesome salt canals, and to poison the air with swampy malaria; and in the seventeenth century the city had so dwindled that the Venetian *podestà* removed his residence from the depopulated island to Burano,—though the bishopric established immediately after the settlement of the refugees at Torcello continued there till 1814, to the satisfaction, no doubt, of the frogs and mosquitoes that had long inherited the former citizens.

I confess that I know little more of the history of Torcello than I found in my guide-book. There I read that the city had once stately civic and religious edifices, and that in the tenth century the Emperor Porphyrogenitus called it "*magnum emporium Torcellanorum*." The much-restored cathedral of the seventh century, a little church, a building supposed to have been the public palace, and other edifices so ruinous and so old that their exact use in other days is not now known, are all that remain of the *magnum emporium*, except some lines of mouldering wall that wander along the canals and through pastures and vineyards, in the last stages of dilapidation and decay. There is a lofty bell-tower, also, from which, no doubt, the Torcellani used to descry afar off the devouring hordes of the barbarians on the mainland, and prepare for defense. As their city was never actually invaded, I am at a loss to account for the so-called Throne of Attila, which stands in the grass-grown piazza before the cathedral; and I fear that it may really have been after all only the seat which the ancient Tribunes of Torcello occupied on

public occasions. It is a stone arm-chair, of a rude stateliness; and though I questioned its authenticity, I went and sat down in it a little while, to give myself the benefit of a doubt in case Attila had really pressed the same seat.

As soon as our gondola touched the grassy shores at Torcello, Giovanna's children, Beppi and Nina, whom we had brought with us to give a first experience of trees and flowers and mother earth, leaped from the boat and took possession of the land and water. By a curious fatality the little girl, bred safely amid the hundred canals of Venice, signalized her absence from their perils by presently falling into the only canal in Torcello, whence she was taken dripping, to be confined at a farmhouse during the rest of our stay. The children were wild with pleasure, being absolutely new to the country, and ran over the island, plucking bouquets of weeds and flowers by armfuls. A rake, borne afield upon the shoulder of a peasant, fascinated the Venetian Beppi, and drew him away to study its strange and wonderful uses.

The simple inhabitants of Torcello came forth with gifts, or rather bargains, of flowers, to meet their discoverers, and in a little while exhausted our soldi. They also attended us in full force when we sat down to lunch, — the old, the young men and maidens, and the little children, all alike sallow, tattered, and dirty. Under these circumstances, a sense of the idyllic and the patriarchal gave zest to our collation, and moved us to bestow, in a splendid manner, fragments of the feast among

the poor Torcellani. The smaller among them even scrambled with the dog for the bones, until a little girl was bitten, when a terrific tumult arose, and the dog was driven home by the whole multitude. The children all had that gift of beauty which Nature seldom denies to the children of their race; but being, as I said, so dirty, their beauty shone forth chiefly from their large, soft eyes. They had a very graceful, bashful archness of manner, and they insinuated beggary so winningly that it would have been impossible for hungry people to deny them. As for us, having lunched, we gave them everything that remained, and went off to feast our enthusiasm for art and antiquity in the cathedral.

I have not the least intention of describing it. I remember best among its wonders the bearing of certain impenitents in one of the mosaics on the walls, whom the artist had meant to represent as suffering in the flames of torment. I think, however, I have never seen complacence equal to that of these sinners, unless it was in the countenances of the seven fat kine, which, as represented in the vestibule of St. Mark's, wear an air of the sleepiest and laziest enjoyment, while the seven lean kine, having just come up from the river, devour steaks from their bleeding haunches. There are other mosaics in the Torcello cathedral, especially those in the apse and in one of the side chapels, which are in a beautiful spirit of art, and form the widest possible contrast to the eighteenth-century high altar, with its insane and ribald angels flying off at the sides, and poising themselves in the rope-dancing attitudes favored by statues of heavenly

persons in the decline of art. The choir is peculiarly built, in the form of a half-circle, with seats rising one above another, as in an amphitheatre, and a flight of steps ascending to the bishop's seat above all, — after the manner of the earliest Christian churches. The parapet before the high altar is of almost transparent marble, delicately sculptured with peacocks and lions, as the Byzantines loved to carve them; and the capitals of the columns dividing the naves are of wonderful richness. Part of the marble pulpit has a curious bass-relief, said to be representative of the worship of Mercury; and indeed the Torcellani owe much of the beauty of their Duomo to unrequited antiquity. They came to be robbed in their turn: for the opulence of their churches was so great that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the severest penalties had to be enacted against those who stole from them. No one will be surprised to learn that the clergy themselves participated in these spoliations; but I believe no ecclesiastic was ever lashed in the piazza, or deprived of an eye or a hand, for his offense.

An arcade runs along the façade of the cathedral, and around the side and front of the adjoining church of Santa Fosca, which is likewise very old. But we found nothing in it but a dusty, cadaverous stench, and so we came away and ascended the campanile. From the top of this you have a view of the lagoon, in all its iridescent hues, and of the heaven-blue sea. Here, looking toward the mainland, I would have been glad to experience the feelings of the Torcellani of old, as they descried the

smoking advance of Huns or Vandals. But the finer emotions are like gifted children, and are seldom equal to occasions. The old woman who had opened the door of the campanile was surprised into hospitality by the sum of money we gave her, and took us through her house (which was certainly very neat and clean) into her garden, where she explained the nature of many familiar trees and shrubs to us poor Venetians.

We went back home over the twilight lagoon, and Giovanna expressed the general feeling when she said: "*Torsello xe beo — no si pol negar; la campagna xe bea, ma benedetta la mia Venezia!*" (Torcello is beautiful — it can't be denied; the country is beautiful, but blessed be my Venice!)

V

THE panorama of the southern lagoon is best seen in a voyage to Chioggia, or Ciozza, the quaint and historic little city that lies twenty miles away from Venice, at one of the ports of the harbor. The Giant Sea-wall, built there by the Republic in her decline, is a work which impresses you more deeply than any other monument of the past with a sense of her former industrial and commercial greatness. Strips of village border the narrow Littorale all the way to Chioggia, and on the right lie the islands of the lagoon. Chioggia itself is hardly more than a village, — a Venice in miniature, like Murano, with canals and boats and bridges. But here the character of life is more amphibious than in brine-bound Venice; and though there is no horse to be seen in the

central streets of Chioggia, peasants' teams penetrate her borders by means of a long bridge from the mainland.

Of course Chioggia has passed through the customary vicissitudes of Italian towns, and has been depopulated at divers times by pestilence, famine, and war. It suffered cruelly in the war with the Genoese in 1380, when it was taken by those enemies of St. Mark; and its people were so wasted by the struggle that the Venetians, on regaining it, were obliged to invite immigration to repopulate its emptiness. I do not know how great comfort the Chiozzotti of that unhappy day took in the fact that some of the earliest experiments with cannon were made in the contest that destroyed them, but I can hardly offer them less tribute than to mention it here. At present the place is peopled almost entirely by sailors and fishermen, whose wives are more famous for their beauty than their amiability. Goldoni's "Baruffe Chiozzotte" is an amusing and vivid picture of the daily battles which the high-spirited ladies of the city fought in the dramatist's time, and which are said to be of frequent occurrence at this day. (Goldoni's family went from Venice to Chioggia when the dramatist was very young. The descriptions of his life there form some of the most interesting chapters of his Memoirs.) The Chiozzotte are the only women of this part of Italy who still preserve a semblance of national costume; and this remnant of more picturesque times consists merely of a skirt of white, which, being open in front, is drawn from the waist over the head and gathered in the hand under

the chin, giving to the flashing black eyes and swarthy features of the youthful wearer a look of very dangerous slyness. The dialect of the Chiozzotti is said to be that of the early Venetians, with an admixture of Greek, and it is more sweet and musical than the dialect now spoken in Venice. "Whether derived," says the author of the "Fiore di Venezia," "from those who first settled these shores, or resulting from other physical and moral causes, it is certain that the tone of the voice is here more varied and powerful: the mouth is thrown wide open in speaking; a passion, a lament, mingles with laughter itself, and there is a continual *ritornello* of words previously spoken. But this speech is full of energy; whoever would study brief and strong modes of expression should come here."

Chioggia was once the residence of noble and distinguished persons, among whom was the painter Rosalba Carrera, famed throughout Europe for her crayon miniatures, and the place produced in the sixteenth century the great maestro Giuseppe Zarlino, "who passes," says Cantù, "for the restorer of modern music," and "whose 'Orfeo' heralded the invention of the musical drama." This composer claimed for his birthplace the fame and honor of the institution of the order of the Capuchins, which he declared to have been founded by Fra Paolo (Giovanni Sambi) of Chioggia. There are no dwellings in the town which approach palatial grandeur, and nothing in the rococo churches to claim attention, unless it is the attributive Bellini in one of them. Yet if you have the courage to climb the bell-tower of the

cathedral, you get from its summit the loveliest imaginable view of many-purpled lagoon and silver-flashing sea; and if you are sufficiently acquainted with Italy and Italians to observe a curious fact, and care to study the subject, you may note the great difference between the inhabitants of Chioggia and those of Palestrina, — an island divided from Chioggia by a half mile of lagoon, and by quite different costume, type of face, and accent.

Just between Chioggia and the sea lies the lazy town of Sottomarina, and I should say that the population of Sottomarina chiefly spent its time in lounging up and down the Sea-wall; while that of Chioggia, when not professionally engaged with the net, gave its leisure to playing *mora*[1] in the shade, or pursuing strangers, and pitilessly offering them boats. For my own part, I refused the subtlest advances of this kind which were made me in Chiozzotto, but fell a helpless prey to a boatman who addressed me in some words of wonderful English, and then rowed me to the Sea-wall at about thrice the usual fare.

As we passed up the shady side of the principal street, we came upon a plump little blond boy, lying asleep on the stones, with his head upon his arm; and as no one was near, the artist of our party stopped to sketch the

[1] *Mora* is the game which the Italians play with their fingers, one throwing out two, three, or four fingers, as the case may be, and calling the number at the same instant. If (so I understood the game) the player mistakes the number of fingers he throws out, he loses; if he hits the number with both voice and fingers, he wins. It is played with tempestuous interest, and is altogether fiendish in appearance.

sleeper. Atmospheric knowledge of the fact spread rapidly, and in a few minutes we were the centre of a general assembly of the people of Chioggia, who discussed us, and the artist's treatment of her subject, in open congress. They handed round the airy chaff as usual, but were very orderly and respectful, nevertheless, — one father of the place quelling every tendency to tumult by kicking his next neighbor, who passed on the penalty till, by this simple and ingenious process, the guilty cause of the trouble was infallibly reached and kicked at last. I placed a number of soldi in the boy's hand, to the visible sensation of the crowd, and then we moved away and left him, heading, as we went, a procession of Chiozzotti, who could not make up their minds to relinquish us till we took refuge in a church. When we came out the procession had disappeared, but all round the church door, and picturesquely scattered upon the pavement in every direction, lay boys asleep, with their heads upon their arms. As we passed laughing through the midst of these slumberers, they rose and followed us with cries of "*Mi tiri zu! Mi tiri zu!*" (Take me down! Take me down!) They ran ahead, and fell asleep again in our path, and round every corner we came upon a sleeping boy; and, indeed, we never got out of that atmosphere of slumber till we returned to the steamer for Venice, when Chioggia shook off her drowsy stupor, and began to tempt us to throw soldi into the water, to be dived for by her awakened children.

XIII. THE ARMENIANS

A PARTICULAR FRIEND — THE SENTIMENT AND THE LEARNING OF SAN LAZZARO — THE COLLEGE OF THE ARMENIANS IN VENICE AND A GRADUATION CEREMONIAL.

AMONG the pleasantest friends we made in Venice were the monks of the Armenian Convent, whose cloistral buildings rise from the glassy lagoon, upon the south of the city, near a mile away. This "bulk

Of mellow brick-work on an isle of bowers"

is walled in with solid masonry from the sea, and incloses a garden-court, filled with all beautiful flowers, and with the memorable trees of the East; while another garden encompasses the monastery itself, and yields those fruits and vegetables which supply the wants of the well-cared-for mortal part of the brothers. The island is called San Lazzaro, and the convent was established in 1717 by a learned and devoted Armenian priest named Mechithar, from whom the present order of monks is called Mechitharist. He was the first who formed the idea of educating a class of priests to act as missionaries among the Armenian nation in the East, and infuse into its civil and religious decay the life of European piety and learning. He founded at Sebaste, therefore, a religious order, of which the seat was after-

wards removed to Constantinople, where the friars met with so much persecution from Armenian heterodoxy that it was again transferred, and fixed at Modone in Morea. That territory fell into the hands of the Turks, and the Mechitharists fled with their leader to Venice, where the Republic bestowed upon them a waste and desolate island, which had formerly been used as a refuge for lepers; and the monks made it the loveliest spot in the lagoons.

I

THE little island has such a celebrity in travel and romance, that I feel my pen catching in the tatters of a threadbare theme. And yet I love the place and its people so well that I could scarcely pass it without mention. Every tourist who spends a week in Venice goes to see the convent, and every one is charmed with it and with the courteous welcome of the fathers. Its best interest is the intrinsic interest attaching to it as a seat of Armenian culture; but persons who relish the sentimentalism of Byron's life find the convent all the more entertaining, from the fact that he did the Armenian language the favor to study it there a little. The monks show his autograph, together with those of other distinguished persons, and the Armenian Bible which he used to read. I understood from one of the friars, Padre Giacomo Issaverdanz, that the brothers knew little or nothing of Byron's celebrity as a poet while he studied with them, and that his proficiency as an Armenian scholar was not such as to win high regard from them. Most readers

who have visited the convent will recall the pleasant face and manners of the young father mentioned, who shows the place to English-speaking travelers, and will care to know that Padre Giacomo was born at Smyrna, and dwelt there in the family of an English lady, till he came to Venice, and entered on his monastic life at San Lazzaro.

He came one morning to breakfast with us, bringing with him Padre Alessio, a teacher in the Armenian College in the city, who had Mesopotamia for his formidable birthplace. But I soon came to know Padre Alessio apart from Mesopotamia, and to find him very interesting as a scholar and an artist. He threw a little grace of poetry around our simple feast, by repeating some Armenian verses, — grace all the more ethereal from our ignorance of their meaning. Our breakfast-table talk wrought to friendship the acquaintance made some time before, and the next morning we received the photograph of Padre Giacomo, and the compliments of the Orient, in a heaped basket of ripe and luscious figs from the garden of the Convent San Lazzaro. When, in turn, we went to visit him at the convent, we had experience of a more curious oriental hospitality. Refreshments were offered to us as to friends, and we lunched fairily upon little dishes of rose leaves, delicately preserved, with all their fragrance, in a "lucent sirup." It seemed that this was a common conserve in the East; but we could hardly divest ourselves of the notion of sacrilege, as we thus fed upon the very perfume of the soul of summer. Pleasant talk accompanied the dainty repast,

— Padre Giacomo recounting for us some of his adventures with the people whom he had to show about the convent, and of whom many were disappointed at not finding a gallery or museum, and went away in extreme disgust; and relating with a sly, sarcastic relish, that blended curiously with his sweetness and gentleness of spirit, how some English people once came with the notion that Lord Byron was an Armenian; how an unhappy French gentleman, who had been robbed in Southern Italy, would not be parted a moment from a huge bludgeon which he carried in his hand, and (probably disordered by his troubles) could hardly be persuaded from attacking the mummy which is in one of the halls; how a sharp, bustling, go-ahead American rushed in one morning, rubbing his hands, and demanding, "Show me all you can in five minutes."

As a seat of learning, San Lazzaro is famed throughout the Armenian world, and gathers under its roof the best scholars and poets of that nation. In the press of the convent books are printed in some thirty different languages; and a number of the fathers employ themselves constantly in works of translation. The most distinguished of the Armenian literati now living at San Lazzaro is the Reverend Father Gomidas Pakraduni, who has published an Armenian version of "Paradise Lost," and whose great labor, the translation of Homer, has been recently issued from the convent press. He was born at Constantinople of an ancient and illustrious family, and took religious orders at San Lazzaro, where he was educated, and where for twenty-five years after

his consecration he held the professorship of his native tongue. He devoted himself especially to the culture of the ancient Armenian, and developed it for the expression of modern ideas; he made exhaustive study of the vast collection of old manuscripts at San Lazzaro, and then went to Paris in pursuance of his purpose, and acquainted himself with the treasures of Armenian learning in the Bibliothèque Royale. He became the first scholar of the age in his national language, and acquired at the same time a profound knowledge of Latin and Greek.

Returning to Constantinople, Father Pakraduni, whose fame had preceded him, took up his residence in the family of a noble Armenian, in the service of the Turkish government; and, while assuming the care of educating his friend's children, began those labors of translation which have since so largely employed him. He made an Armenian version of Pindar, and wrote a work on Rhetoric, both of which were destroyed by fire while yet in manuscript. He labored, meanwhile, on his translation of the Iliad, — a youthful purpose which he did not see fulfilled till the year 1860, when he was already seventy. In this translation he revived with admirable success an ancient species of Armenian verse, which bears, in flexibility and strength, comparison with the original Greek. Another of his labors was the production of an Armenian Grammar, in which he reduced to rule and order the numerous forms of his native tongue, never before presented by one work in all its variety.

Padre Giacomo, to whose great kindness I am in-

debted for a biographic and critical notice in writing of Father Pakraduni, considers the epic poem by that scholar a far greater work than any of his philological treatises, profound and thorough as these are. When nearly completed, this poem perished in the same conflagration which consumed the Pindar and the Rhetoric; but the poet patiently began his work anew, and after eight years gave his epic of twenty books and twenty-two thousand verses to the press. The hero of the poem is Häik, the first Armenian patriarch after the flood, and the founder of a kingly dynasty. Nimrod, the great hunter, drunk with victory, declares himself a god, and ordains his own worship throughout the Orient. Häik refuses to obey the commands of the tyrant, takes up arms against him, and finally kills him in battle. "In the style of this poem," writes Padre Giacomo, "it is hard to tell whether to admire most its richness, its energy, its sweetness, its melancholy, its freedom, its dignity, or its harmony, for it has all these virtues in turn. The descriptive parts are depicted with the faithfulest pencil: the battle scenes can be matched only in the Iliad."

Father Pakraduni returned, after twenty-five years' sojourn at Constantinople, to publish his epic at San Lazzaro, where he still lives, a tranquil, gentle old man, with a patriarchal beauty and goodness of face. In 1861 he printed his translation of Milton, with a dedication to Queen Victoria. His other works bear witness to the genuineness of his inspiration and piety, and the diligence of his study: they are poems, poetic translations

from the Italian, religious essays, and grammatical treatises.

Indeed, the existence of all the friars at San Lazzaro is one of close and earnest study; and life grows so fond of these quiet monks that it will hardly part with them at last. One of them is ninety-five years old, and, until 1863, there was a lay-brother among them whose years numbered a hundred and eight, and who died of old age, on the 17th of September, after passing fifty-eight years at San Lazzaro. From biographic memoranda furnished me by Padre Giacomo, I learn that the name of this patriarch was George Karabagiak, and that he was a native of Kutaieh in Asia Minor. He was for a long time the disciple of Dèdè Vartabied, a renowned preacher of the Armenian faith, and he afterward taught the doctrines of his master in the Armenian schools. Failing in his desire to enter upon the sacerdotal life at Constantinople, he procured his admission as lay-brother at San Lazzaro, where all his remaining days were spent. He was not very learned; but he had a great passion for poetry, and he was the author of some thirty small works on different subjects. During the course of his long and diligent life, which was chiefly spent in learning and teaching, he may be said to have hardly known a day's sickness, and at last he died of no perceptible disorder. The years tired him to death. He had a trifling illness in August, and as he convalesced, he grew impatient of the tenacious life which held him to earth. Slowly pacing up and down the corridors of the convent, he used to crave the

prayers of the brothers whom he met, beseeching them to intercede with Heaven that he might be suffered to die. One day he said to the archbishop, "I fear that God has abandoned me, and I shall live." Only a little while before his death he wrote some verses, as Padre Giacomo's memorandum witnesses, "with a firm and steady hand," and the manner of his death was this, — as recorded in the grave and simple words of my friend's note: — "Finally, on the 17th of September, very early in the morning, a brother entering his chamber asked him how he was. 'Well,' he replied, turning his face to the wall, and spoke no more. He had passed to a better life."

II

BESIDES the Convent of San Lazzaro, where Armenian boys from all parts of the East are educated for the priesthood, the nation has a college in the city in which boys intended for secular careers receive their schooling. The Palazzo Zenobia is devoted to the use of this college, where, besides room for study, the boys have abundant space and apparatus for gymnastics, and ample grounds for gardening. We once passed a pleasant summer evening there, strolling through the fragrant alleys of the garden, in talk with the father-professors, and looking on at the gymnastic feats of the boys; and when the annual exhibition of the school took place in the fall, we were invited to be present.

The room appointed for the exhibition was the great hall of the palace, which in other days had evidently

been a ballroom. The ceiling was frescoed in the manner of the last century, with Cupids and Venuses, Vices and Virtues, fruits and fiddles, dwarfs and blackamoors; and the painted faces looked down on a scene of as curious interest as ever the loves and graces of Tiepolo might hope to see, when the boys of the college, after assisting at *Te Deum* in the chapel, entered the room, and took their places.

At the head of the hall sat the archbishop, in his dark robes, with his heavy gold chain about his neck, — a figure and a countenance in all things spiritual, gracious, and reverend. There is small difference, I believe, between the creeds of the Armenians and the Roman Catholics, but a very great disparity in the looks of the two priesthoods, which is all in favor of the Armenians. The Armenian wears his beard, and the Latin shaves, — which may have a great deal to do with the holiness of appearance. Perhaps, also, the mild nature of the oriental yields more sweetly and entirely to the self-denials of the ecclesiastical vocation, and thus wins a fairer grace from them. At any rate, I have not seen anything but content and calm in the visages of the Armenian fathers, among whom the priest-face, as a type, does not exist, though it would mark the Latin ecclesiastic in whatever dress he wore. There is, moreover, a look of such entire confidence and unworldly sincerity in their eyes that I could not help thinking, as I turned from the portly young fathers to the dark-faced, grave, old-fashioned schoolboys, that an exchange of beard only was needed to effect an exchange of character

between those youthful elders and their pupils. The gray-haired archbishop is a tall and slender man; but nearly all the fathers take kindly to curves and circles, and glancing down a row of these amiable priests one could scarcely repress a smile at the constant recurrence of the line of beauty in their well-rounded persons.

On the right and left of the archbishop were the few invited guests, and at the other end of the saloon sat one of the fathers, the plump key-stone of an arch of comfortable young students expanding toward us. Most of the boys are from Turkey (the Armenians of Venice, though acknowledging the Pope as their spiritual head, are the subjects of the Sultan), others are of Asiatic birth, and two are Egyptians.

The mother of these boys — a black-eyed, olive-cheeked lady, very handsome and fashionable — was present with their younger brother. I hardly know whether to be ashamed of having been awed by hearing of the little Egyptian that his native tongue was Arabic, and that he spoke nothing more occidental than Turkish. But, indeed, was it wholly absurd to offer a tacit homage to this favored boy, who must know the "Arabian Nights" in the original?

The exercises began with a theme in Armenian — a language which, but for its English abundance of sibilants, and a certain German rhythm, was wholly outlandish to our ears. Themes in Italian, German, and French succeeded, and then came one in English. We afterward had speech with the author of this essay, who expressed the liveliest passion for English, in the philo-

women. They are sometimes, also, very pretty; and I have seen one Jewish lady who might have stepped out of the sacred page, down from the patriarchal age, and been known for Rebecca, with her oriental grace and sensitive, high-bred look and bearing. But it is to the Ghetto I want to take you now (by the way we went one sunny day late last fall), that I may show you something of the Jewish past, which has survived to the nineteenth century in much of the discomfort and rank savor of the dark ages.

I

IN the fifteenth century all the riches of the Orient had been poured into the lap of Venice, and a reckless profusion took possession of her citizens. The money, hastily and easily got, went as rapidly as it came. It went chiefly for dress, in which the Venetian still indulges very often to the stint of his stomach; and the ladies of that bright-colored, showy day bore fortunes on their delicate persons in the shape of costly vestments of scarlet, black, green, white, maroon, or violet, covered with gems, glittering with silver buttons, and ringing with silver bells. The fine gentlemen of the period were not behind them in extravagance; and the priests were peculiarly luxurious in dress, wearing gay silken robes, with cowls of fur and girdles of gold and silver. Sumptuary laws were vainly passed to repress the general license, and fortunes were wasted and wealthy families reduced to beggary.[1] There was yet no Monte di Pietà,

[1] Gallicioli, *Memorie Venete.*

and the demand for pawnbrokers becoming imperative, the Republic was obliged to recall the Hebrews from the exile into which they had been driven some time before, that they might set up pawnshops and succor necessity. They came back, however, only for a limited time, and were obliged to wear a badge of yellow color upon the breast, to distinguish them from the Christians, and later a yellow cap, then a red hat, and then a hat of oil-cloth. They could not acquire houses or lands in Venice, or practice any trade, or exercise any noble art but medicine. They were assigned a dwelling-place in the vilest and unhealthiest part of the city, and their quarter was called Ghetto, from the Hebrew *nghedah*, a congregation.[1] They were obliged to pay their landlords a third more rent than Christians paid; the Ghetto was walled in, and its gates were kept by Christian guards, who every day opened them at dawn and closed them at dark, and who were paid by the Jews. They were not allowed to come out of the Ghetto on holidays; and two barges, with armed men, watched over them night and day, while a special magistracy had charge of their affairs. Their synagogues were built at Mestre, on the mainland; and their dead were buried in the sand upon the seashore, whither, on the Mondays of September, the baser sort of Venetians went to make merry, and drunken men and women danced above their desecrated tombs. These unhappy people were forced also to pay tribute to the state, at first every third year, then every fifth year, and then every tenth year,

[1] Mutinelli.

the privilege of residence being ingeniously renewed to them at these periods for a round sum; but, in spite of all, they flourished upon the waste of their oppressors; they waxed rich as these waxed poor, and were not again expelled from the city.[1]

There never was any attempt to disturb the Hebrews by violence, except on one occasion, about the close of the fifteenth century, when a tumult was raised against them for child-murder. This, however, was promptly quelled by the Republic before any harm was done them; and they dwelt peacefully in their Ghetto till the lofty gates of their prison caught the sunlight of modern civilization, and crumbled beneath it. Then many of the Jews came out and fixed their habitations in different parts of the city, but many others clung to the spot where their temples still remain, and which was hallowed by long suffering, and soaked with the blood of innumerable generations of geese. So, although you find Jews everywhere in Venice, you never find a Christian in the Ghetto, which is held to this day by a large Hebrew population.

II

WE had not started purposely to see the Ghetto, and for this reason it had that purely incidental relish, which is the keenest savor of the object of interest. We were on an expedition to find Sior Antonio Rioba, who has been from time immemorial the means of ponderous practical jokes in Venice. Sior Antonio is a rough-hewn statue set in the corner of an ordinary gro-

[1] *Del Commercio dei Veneziani.* Mutinelli.

cery, near the Ghetto. He has a pack on his back and a staff in his hand; his face is painted, and is habitually dishonored with dirt thrown upon it by boys. On the wall near him is painted a bell-pull, with the legend, *Sior Antonio Rioba.* Rustics, raw apprentices, and Germans new to the city, are furnished with packages to be carried to Sior Antonio Rioba, who is very hard to find, and not able to receive the messages when found, though there is always a crowd of loafers near to receive the unlucky simpleton who brings them. "*E poi, che commedia vederli arrabiarsi! Che ridere!*" That is the Venetian notion of fun, and no doubt the scene is amusing. I was curious to see Sior Antonio, because a comic journal bearing his name had been published during the time of the Republic of 1848, and from the fact that he was then a sort of Venetian Pasquino. But I question now if he was worth seeing, except as something that brought me into the neighborhood of the Ghetto, and suggested the idea of visiting that quarter.

As we left him and passed up the canal in our gondola, we came unawares upon the church of Santa Maria dell' Orto, one of the most graceful Gothic churches in the city. The façade is exquisite, and has two Gothic windows of a religious and heavenly beauty. One longed to fall down on the space of green turf before the church, now bathed in the soft golden October sunshine, and recant these happy, commonplace centuries of heresy, and have back again the good old believing days of bigotry, and superstition, and roasting, and racking, if only to have once

more the men who dreamed those windows out of their faith and piety (if they did, which I doubt), and made them with their patient, reverent hands (if their hands *were* reverent, which I doubt). The church is called Santa Maria dell' Orto, from the miraculous image of Our Lady which was found in an orchard where the temple now stands. We saw this miraculous sculpture, and thought it reflected little credit upon the supernatural artist. The church is properly that of Saint Christopher, but the saint has been titularly vanquished by the Madonna, though he comes out gigantically triumphant in a fresco above the high altar.

There were once many fine paintings by Tintoretto and Bellini in this church; but as the interior is now in course of restoration, the paintings have been removed to the Academy, and we saw only one, which was by the former master, and had all his striking imagination in the conception, all his strength in the drawing, and all his lampblack in the faded coloring. In the centre of the church, the sacristan scraped the carpenter's rubbish away from a flat tablet in the floor, and said that it was Tintoretto's tomb. It is a sad thing to doubt even a sacristan, but I pointed out that the tomb bore any name in the world rather than Robusti. "Ah!" said the sacristan, "it is just that which makes it so very curious, — that Tintoretto should wish to be buried under another name!" [1]

[1] Members of the family of Tintoretto are actually buried in this church; and no sacristan of right feeling could do less than point out some tomb as that of the great painter himself.

It was a warm, sunny day in the fall, as I said; yet as we drew near the Ghetto, we noticed in the air many white, floating particles, like lazy, straggling flakes of snow. These we afterward found to be the down of multitudes of geese, which are forever plucked by the whole apparent force of the populace,— the fat of the devoted birds being substituted for lard in the kitchens of the Ghetto, and their flesh for pork. As we approached the filthy little riva at which we landed, a blond young Israelite, lavishly adorned with feathers, came running to know if we wished to see the church, — by which name he put the synagogue to the Gentile comprehension. The street through which we passed had shops on either hand, and at the doors groups of jocular Hebrew youth sat plucking geese; while within, long files of all that was mortal of geese hung from the rafters and the walls. The ground was webbed with the feet of geese, and certain loutish boys, who passed to look at us, had each a goose dragging at his heels, in the forlorn and elongated manner peculiar to dead poultry. The ground was stained with the blood of geese, and the smell of roasting geese came out of the windows of the grim and lofty houses.

Our guide was picturesque, but the most helpless and inconclusive cicerone I ever knew; and while his long, hooked Hebrew nose caught my idle fancy, and his soft blue eyes excused a great deal of inefficiency, the aimless fashion in which he mounted dirty staircases for the keys of the synagogue, and came down without them, and the manner in which he shouted to the heads

of unctuous Jessicas thrust out of windows, and never gained the slightest information by his efforts, were imbecilities that we presently found insupportable, and we gladly cast him off for a dark-faced Hebrew boy who brought us at once to the door of the Spanish synagogue.

III

OF seven synagogues in the Ghetto, the principal was built in 1655, by the Spanish Jews who had fled to Venice from the terrors of the Holy Office. Its exterior has nothing to distinguish it as a place of worship, and we reached the interior of the temple by means of some dark and narrow stairs. In the floor and the walls of the passage-way were set tablets to the memory of rich and pious Israelites who had bequeathed their substance for the behoof of the sanctuary; and the sacristan informed us that the synagogue was also endowed with a fund by rich descendants of Spanish Jews in Amsterdam. These moneys are kept to furnish indigent Israelitish couples with the means of marrying, and any who claim the benefit of the fund are entitled to it. The sacristan — a little wiry man, with bead-black eyes, and of a shoemakerish presence — told us with evident pride that he was himself a descendant of the Spanish Jews. Howbeit, he was now many centuries from speaking the Castilian, which, I had read, was still used in the families of the Jewish fugitives from Spain to the Levant. He spoke, instead, the Venetian of Cannaregio, with that Jewish thickness which distinguishes the race's utterance, no matter what language its children are born to. It is a

curious philological fact, which I have heard repeatedly alleged by Venetians, and which is perhaps worth noting here, that Jews speaking their dialect have not only this thickness of accent, but also a peculiarity of construction which marks them at once.

We found the contracted interior of the synagogue hardly worth looking at. Instead of having anything oriental or peculiar in its architecture, it was in a bad spirit of baroque architecture. A gallery encircled the inside, and here the women, during worship, sat apart from the men, who had seats below, running back from either side of the altar. I had no right, coming from a Protestant land of pews, to indulge in that sentimentality; but I could not help being offended to see that each of these seats might be lifted up and locked into the upright back, and thus placed beyond question at the disposal of the owner: the freedom and equality in the Catholic churches is much pleasanter. The sacristan brought a ponderous silver key, and unlocking the door behind the pulpit, showed us the Hebrew Scriptures used during the service by the Rabbi. They formed an immense parchment volume, and were rolled in silk upon a wooden staff. This was the sole object of interest in the synagogue, and its inspection concluded our visit.

We descended the narrow stairs and emerged upon the piazza which we had left. It was only partly paved with brick, and was very dirty. The houses which surrounded it were on the outside old and shabby, and, even in this Venice of lofty edifices, remarkably high. A wooden bridge crossed a vile canal to another open

space, where once congregated the merchants who sell antique furniture, old pictures, and objects of virtù. They are now, however, found everywhere in the city, and most of them are on the Grand Canal, where they heap together marvelous collections, and establish authenticities beyond cavil. "Is it an original?" asked a lady who was visiting one of their shops, as she paused before an attributive Veronese, or for all I know perhaps a Titian. "*Sì, signora, originalissimo!*" (most original).

I do not understand why any class of Jews should still remain in the Ghetto, but it is certain, as I said, that they do remain there in great numbers. It may be that the impurity of the place and the atmosphere is conducive to purity of race; but I question if the Jews buried on the sandy slope of the Lido, and blown over by the sweet sea wind,—it must needs blow many centuries to cleanse them of the Ghetto,—are not rather to be envied by the inhabitants of those high dirty houses and low dirty lanes. There was not a touch of anything to relieve the noisomeness of the Ghetto to its visitors; and they applauded, with a common voice, the neatness which had prompted Andrea the gondolier to roll up the carpet from the floor of his gondola, and not to spread it again within the limits of that quarter.

XV. SOME MEMORABLE PLACES

ACCIDENTAL RESEARCHES — THE CONVENT OF PAOLO SARPI — HIS CONTROVERSY WITH ROME — HIS ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION — THE VENETIAN PASQUINO AND THE HOUSES OF TINTORETTO AND TITIAN — BYRON'S PALACE.

WE came away from the Ghetto, as we had arrived, in a gentle fall of goose-down, and winding crookedly through a dirty canal, glided into purer air and cleaner waters. I cannot well say how it was we came upon the old Servite Convent, which I had often looked for in vain, and which in its association with the great name of Paolo Sarpi is one of the most memorable places in Venice. We reached it, after passing by that old, old palace, which was appointed in the early ages of Venetian commerce for the reception of oriental traffic and traffickers, and where it is said the Moorish merchants resided till the later time of the Fondaco dei Turchi on the Grand Canal. The façade of the palace is richly sculptured; and near one corner is the bass-relief of a camel and his turbaned driver, — in token, perhaps, that man and beast (as orientals would understand them) were here entertained.

I

WE had lived long enough in Venice to know that it was by no means worth while to explore the interior of

this old palace because the outside was attractive, and so we left it; and turning a corner, found ourselves in a shallow canal, with houses on one side, and a grassy bank on the other. The bank sloped gently from the water up to the walls of some edifice, on which ruin seemed to have fastened soon after the architect had begun his work. The vast walls, embracing several acres in their close, rose only some thirty or forty feet from the ground, — only high enough, indeed, to join over the top of the great Gothic gates, which pierced them on two façades. There must have been barracks near; for on the sward, under the walls, muskets were stacked, and Austrian soldiers were practicing the bayonet exercise with long poles padded at the point. "*Eins, zwei, drei,—vorwärts! Eins, zwei, drei,—rückwärts!*" snarled the drill-sergeant; and the dark-faced Hungarian soldiers — who may have soon afterward prodded their Danish fellow-beings all the more effectively for that day's training—stooped, writhed, and leaped obedient. I, who had already caught sight of a little tablet in the wall bearing the name of Paolo Sarpi, could not feel the propriety of the military performance on that scene; yet I was so glad, dismounting from the gondola, to get by the soldiers without being forced back at the padded point of a pole, that I offered no audible objection to their presence.

So passing to the other side, I found entrance through a disused chapel to the interior of the convent. The gates on the outside were richly sculptured, and were reverend and clean; tufts of harsh grass grew from their arches, and hung down like the "overwhelming

brows" of age. Within, at first sight, I saw nothing but heaps of rubbish, piles of stone, and here and there a mutilated statue. I remember two pathetic caryatides, that seemed to have broken and sunk under too heavy a weight for their gentle beauty — and everywhere the unnamable filth with which ruin is always dishonored in Italy, and which makes the most picturesque and historic places inaccessible to the foot, and intolerable to the senses and the soul. I was thinking with a savage indignation on this incurable *porcheria* of the Italian poor (who are guilty of such desecrations), when my eye fell upon an inclosed space in one corner, where some odd-looking boulders were heaped together. It was a space about six feet in depth, and twenty feet square; and the boulders, on closer inspection, turned out to be human skulls, nestling on piles of human bones. In any other land than Italy I think I should have turned from the grisly sight with a cowardly sickness and shuddering; but here! — Why, heaven and earth seem to take the loss of men so good-naturedly, — so many men have died and passed away with their difficult, ambitious, and troublesome little schemes, — and the great mass of mankind is taken so small account of in the course of destiny, that the idea of death does not appear so alien and repulsive as elsewhere, and the presence of such evidences of our poor mortality can scarcely offend sensibility. These were doubtless the bones of the good Servite friars who had been buried in their convent, and had been digged up to make way for certain improvements now taking place within its

walls. I have no doubt that their deaths were a rest to their bodies, to say nothing of their souls. If they were at all in their lives like those who have come after them, the sun baked their bald brows in summer, and their naked feet — poor feet! clapping round in wooden-soled sandals over the frozen stones of Venice — were swollen and gnawed with chilblains in winter; and no doubt some fat friar of their number, looking all the droller in his bare feet for the spectacles on his nose, came down Calle Falier then, as now, to collect the charity of bread and fuel, far oftener than the dwellers in that aristocratic precinct wished to see him.

The friars' skulls looked contented enough, and smiled after the hearty manner of skulls; and some of the leg-bones were thrust through the inclosing fence, and hung rakishly over the top. As to their spirits, I suppose they must have found out by this time that these confused and shattered tabernacles which they left behind them are not nearly so corrupt and dead as the monastic system which still cumbers the earth. People are building on the site of the old convent a hospital for indigent and decrepit women, where a religious sisterhood will have care of the inmates. It is a good end enough, but I think it would be the true compensation if all the rubbish of the old cloister were cleared from the area of those walls, and a great garden planted in the space, where lovers might whisper their wise nonsense, and children might romp and frolic, till the crumbling masonry forgot its old office of imprisonment and the memory of its prisoners. For here, one could only think

of the moping and mumming herd of monks, who were certainly not worth remembering, while the fame of Paolo Sarpi, and the good which he did, refused to be localized. That good is an inheritance which has enriched the world; but the share of Venice has been comparatively small in it, and that of this old convent ground still less. I rather wondered, indeed, that I should have taken the trouble to look up the place; but it is a harmless, if even a very foolish, pastime to go seeking for the secret of the glory of the palm in the earth where it struck root and flourished. So far as the life-long presence and the death of a man of clear brain and true heart could hallow any scene, this ground was holy; for here Sarpi lived, and here in his cell he died, a simple Servite friar, — he who had caught the bolts of excommunication launched against the Republic from Rome, and broken them in his hand; who had breathed upon the mighty arm of the temporal power, and withered it to the juiceless stock it now remains. And yet I could not feel that this ground *was* holy, and it did not make me think of Sarpi; and I believe that only those travelers who invent in cold blood their impressions of memorable places ever have remarkable impressions to record.

II

ONCE, before the time of Sarpi, an excommunication was pronounced against the Republic with a result as terrible as that of the later interdict was absurd. Venice took possession, early in the fourteenth century, of Ferrara, by virtue of a bargain which the high contracting

parties — the Republic and an exiled claimant to the ducal crown of Ferrara — had no right to make. The father of the banished prince had displeased him by marrying late in life, when the thoughts of a good man should be turned on other things, and the son compassed the sire's death. For this the Ferrarese drove him away, and as they would not take him back to reign over them at the suggestion of Venice, he resigned his rights in favor of the Republic, and the Republic at once annexed the city to its territories. The Ferrarese appealed to the pope for his protection, and Clement V, supporting an ancient but long quiescent claim to Ferrara on the part of the Church, called upon the Venetians to surrender the city, and, on their refusal, excommunicated them. All Christian peoples were commanded "to arm against the Venetians, to spoil them of their goods, as separated from the union of Christians, and as enemies of the Roman Church." They were driven out of Ferrara, but their troubles did not end with their loss of the city. Giustina Renier-Michiel says the nations, under the shelter of the pope's permission and command, "exercised against them every species of cruelty; there was no wrong or violence of which they were not victims. All the rich merchandise which they had in France, in Flanders, and in other places, was confiscated; their merchants were arrested, maltreated, and some of them killed. Woe to us, if the Saracens had been baptized Christians! our nation would have been utterly destroyed. Such was the ruin brought upon us by this excommunication that to this day it is a popular saying, concerning a man of

gloomy aspect, '*He looks as if he were bringing the excommunication of Ferrara.*'"

No proverb, sprung from the popular terror, commemorates the interdict of the Republic which took place in 1606, and which, I believe, does not survive in popular recollection at Venice. It was at first a collision of the Venetian and Papal authorities at Ferrara, and then an interference of the pope to prevent the execution of secular justice upon certain ecclesiastical offenders in Venetia, which resulted in the excommunication of the Republic, and finally in the defeat of St. Peter and the triumph of St. Mark. Chief among the ecclesiastical offenders mentioned were the worthy Abbate Brandolino of Narvesa, who was accused, among other things, of poisoning his own father; and the good Canonico Saraceni of Vicenza, who was repulsed in overtures made to his beautiful cousin, and who revenged himself by defaming her character, and "filthily defacing" the doors of her palace. The abbate was arrested, and the canon, on this lady's complaint to the Ten at Venice, was thrown into prison, and the weak and furious Pope Paul V, being refused their release by the Ten, excommunicated the whole Republic.

In the same year, that is to say 1552, the bane and antidote, Paul the Pope and Paul Sarpi the friar, were sent into the world. The latter grew in piety, fame, and learning, and at the time the former began his quarrel with the Republic there was none in Venice so fit and prompt as Sarpi to stand forth in her defense. He was at once taken into the service of St. Mark, and his clear,

acute mind fashioned the spiritual weapons of the Republic, and helped to shape the secular measures taken to annul the interdict. As soon as the bull of excommunication was issued, the Republic instructed her officers to stop every copy of it at the frontier, and it was never read in any church in the Venetian dominions. The Senate refused to receive it from the Papal Nuncio. All priests, monks, and other servants of the Church, as well as all secular persons, were commanded to disregard it; and refractory ecclesiastics were forced to open their churches on pain of death. The Jesuits and Capuchins were banished; and clerical intriguers, whom Rome sent in swarms to corrupt social and family relations, by declaring an end of civil government in Venice, and preaching among women disobedience to patriotic husbands and fathers, were severely punished. With internal safety thus provided for, the Republic intrusted her moral, religious, and political defense entirely to Sarpi, who devoted himself to his trust with fidelity, zeal, and power.

III

IT might have been expected that the friend of Galileo, and the most learned and enlightened man of his country, would have taken the short and decisive method of discarding all allegiance to Rome as the most logical resistance to the unjust interdict. But the Venetians have always been faithful Catholics,[1] and

[1] It is convenient here to attest the truth of certain views of religious sentiment in Italy, which Mr. Thomas Adolphus Trollope, in his *Paul the Pope and Paul the Friar*, quotes from an "Italian author, by no means

Sarpi was (or, according to the papal writers, seemed to be) a sincere and obedient Servite friar, believing in the spiritual supremacy of the pope, and revering the religion of Rome. He therefore fought Paul inside of the Church, and his writings on the interdict remain the monument of his polemical success. He was the heart and brain of the Republic's whole resistance, — he supplied her with inexhaustible reasons and answers, — and, though tempted, accused, and threatened, he never swerved from his fidelity to her.

As he was the means of her triumph,[1] he remained

friendly to Catholicism, and very well qualified to speak of the progress of opinions and tendencies among his fellow-countrymen." This author is Bianchi Giovini, who, speaking of modern Catholicism as the heir of the old materialistic paganism, says: "The Italians have identified themselves with this mode of religion. Cultivated men find in it the truth there is in it, and the people find what is agreeable to them. But both the former and the latter approve it as conformable to the national character. And whatever may be the religious system which shall govern our descendants twenty centuries hence, I venture to affirm that the exterior forms of it will be pretty nearly the same as those which prevail at present, and which did prevail twenty centuries ago." Mr. Trollope generously dissents from the "*pessimism*" of these views. The views are discouraging for some reason; but, with considerable disposition and fair opportunity to observe Italian character in this respect, I had arrived at precisely these conclusions. I wish here to state that in my slight sketch of Sarpi and his times I have availed myself freely of Mr. Trollope's delightful book — it is near being too much of a good thing — named above.

[1] The triumph was such only so far as the successful resistance to the interdict was concerned; for at the intercession of the Catholic powers the Republic gave up the ecclesiastical prisoners, and allowed all the banished priests except the Jesuits to return. The Venetians utterly refused to perform any act of humiliation or penance. The interdict had been defied, and it remained despised.

the object of her love. He could never be persuaded to desert his cell in the Minorite Convent for the apartments appointed him by the State; and even when his busy days were spent in council at the Ducal Palace, he returned each night to sleep in the cloister. After the harmless interdict had been removed by Paul, and the unyielding Republic forgiven, the wrath of Rome remained kindled against the friar whose logic had been too keen for the last reason of popes. He had been tried for heresy in his youth at Milan, and acquitted; again, during the progress of St. Mark's quarrel with Rome, his orthodoxy had been questioned; and now that all was over, and Rome could turn her attention to one particular offender, he was entreated, coaxed, commanded to come to her, and put her heart at rest concerning those old accusations. But Sarpi was very well in Venice. He had been appointed Consultor in Theology to the Republic, and had received free admission to the secret archives of the State, — a favor, till then, never bestowed on any. So he would not go to Rome, and Rome sent assassins to take his life. One evening, as he was returning from the Ducal Palace in company with a lay-brother of the convent, and an old patrician, very infirm and helpless, he was attacked by these *nuncios* of the papal court: one of them seized the lay-brother, and another the patrician, while a third dealt Sarpi innumerable dagger thrusts. He fell as if dead, and the ruffians made off in the confusion.

Sarpi had been fearfully wounded, but he recovered. The action of the Republic in this affair is a comforting

refutation of the saying that Republics are ungrateful, and the common belief that Venice was particularly so. The most strenuous and unprecedented efforts were made to take the assassins, and the most terrific penalties were denounced against them. What was much better, new honors were showered upon Sarpi, and extraordinary and affectionate measures were taken to provide for his safety.

And, in fine, he lived in the service of the Republic, revered and beloved, till his seventieth year, when he died with zeal for her good shaping his last utterance: "I must go to St. Mark, for it is late, and I have much to do."

Brave Sarpi, and brave Republic! Men cannot honor them enough. For though the terrors of the interdict were doubted to be harmless even at that time, it had remained for them to prove the interdict, then and forever, an instrument as obsolete as the catapult.

I was so curious as to make some inquiry among the workmen on the old convent ground, whether any stone or other record commemorative of Sarpi had been found in the demolished cells. I hoped, not very confidently, to gather some trace of his presence there, — to have, perhaps, the spot on which he died shown me. To a man, they were utterly ignorant of Sarpi, while affecting, in the Italian manner, to be perfectly informed on the subject. I was passed, with my curiosity, from one to another, till I fell into the hands of a kind of foreman, to whom I put my questions anew. He was a man of Louis Napoleonic beard, and such fair red-and-white complexion

that he impressed me as having escaped from a show of wax-works, and I was not surprised to find him a wax figure in point of intelligence. He seemed to think my questions the greatest misfortunes which had ever befallen him, and to regard each suggestion of *Sarpi — tempo della Repubblica — scomunica di Paolo Quinto* — as an intolerable oppression. He could only tell me that on a certain spot (which he pointed out with his foot) in the demolished church, there had been found a stone with Sarpi's name upon it. The padrone, who had the contract for building the new convent, had said, "Truly, I have heard speak of this Sarpi;" but the stone had been broken, and he did not know what had become of it.

And, in fact, the only thing that remembered Sarpi, on the site of the convent where he spent his life, died, and was buried, was the little tablet on the outside of the wall, of which the abbreviated Latin announced that he had been Theologue to the Republic, and that his dust was now removed to the island of San Michele. After this failure, I had no humor to make researches for the bridge on which the friar was attacked by his assassins. But, indeed, why should I look for it? Finding it, could I have kept in my mind the fine dramatic picture I now have, of Sarpi returning to his convent on a mild October evening, weary with his long walk from St. Mark's, and pacing with downcast eyes, — the old patrician and the lay-brother at his side, and the masked and stealthy assassins, with uplifted daggers, behind him? Nay, I fear I should have found the bridge with some scene of modern life

upon it, and brought away in my remembrance an old woman with an oil-bottle, or a straggling boy with a tumbler, and a very little wine in it.

IV

ON our way home from the Servite Convent, we stopped again near the corner and bridge of Sior Antonio Rioba,— this time to go into the house of Tintoretto, which stands close at the right hand, on the same quay. The house, indeed, might make some pretensions to be called a palace: it is large, and has a carved and balconied front, in which are set a now illegible tablet describing it as the painter's dwelling, and a medallion portrait of Robusti. It would have been well if I had contented myself with this goodly outside; for penetrating, by a long narrow passage and complicated stairway, to the interior of the house, I found that it had nothing to offer me but the usual number of commonplace rooms in the usual blighting state of restoration. I must say that the people of the house, considering they had nothing in the world to show me, were kind and patient under the intrusion, and answered with very polite affirmation my discouraged inquiry if this were really Tintoretto's house.

Their conduct was different from that of the present inmates of Titian's house, near the Fondamenta Nuovi, in a little court at the left of the church of the Jesuits. These unreasonable persons think it an intolerable bore that the enlightened traveling public should break in upon their privacy. They put their heads out of the

upper windows, and assure the strangers that the house is as utterly restored within as they behold it without (and it *is* extremely restored), that it merely occupies the site of the painter's dwelling, and that there is nothing whatever to see in it. I never myself had the heart to force an entrance after these protests; but an acquaintance of the more obdurate sex, whom I had the honor to accompany thither, once did so, and came out with a story of rafters of the original Titianic kitchen being still visible in the new one. After a lapse of two years I revisited the house, and found that so far from having learned patience by frequent trial, the inmates had been apparently goaded into madness during the interval. They seemed to know of our approach by instinct, and thrust their heads out, ready for protest, before we were near enough to speak. The lazy, frowzy women, the worthless men, and idle, loafing boys of the neighborhood, gathered round to witness the encounter; but though repeatedly commanded to ring (I was again in company with ladies), and try to force the place, I refused decidedly to do so. The garrison were strengthening their position by plastering and renewed renovation, and I doubt that by this time the original rafters are no longer to be seen. A plasterer's boy, with a fine sense of humor, stood clapping his trowel on his board, inside the house, while we debated retreat, and derisively invited us to enter: "*Suoni pure, O signore! Questa è la famosa casa del gran pittore, l'immortale Tiziano, — suoni, signore!*" (Ring, by all means, sir. This is the famous house of the great painter, the im-

mortal Titian. Ring!) *Da capo.* We retired amid t scorn of the populace. But indeed I could not blar the inhabitants of Titian's house; and were I condemn to live in a place so famous as to attract idle curiosi flushed and insolent with travel, I should go to t verge of man-traps and shot-guns to protect myself.

This house, which is now hemmed in by larger buil ings of later date, had in the painter's time an inco parably "lovely and delightful situation." Standi near the northern boundary of the city, it looked c over the lagoon,— across the quiet isle of sepulchr San Michele,— across the smoking chimneys of t Murano glass-works, and the bell-towers of her church —to the long line of the seashore on the right and the mainland on the left; and beyond the nearer lago islands and the faintly penciled outlines of Torce and Burano in front, to the sublime distance of t Alps, shining in silver and purple, and resting th snowy heads against the clouds. It had a pleasa garden of flowers and trees, into which the painter d scended by an open stairway, and in which he is sa to have studied the famous tree in The Death of Pet Martyr. Here he entertained the great and noble of h day, and here he feasted and made merry with the gent sculptor Sansovino, and with their common friend, th rascal-poet Aretino. The painter's and the sculptor wives knew each other, and Sansovino's Paola was ofte in the house of Cecilia Vecellio;[1] and any one who

[1] The wife of Titian's youth was, according to Ticozzi, named Lucia. It in Mutinelli that I find allusion to Cecilia. The author of the *Annali U*

wise enough not to visit the place, can easily think of those ladies there, talking at an open window that gives upon the pleasant garden, where their husbands walk up and down together in the purple evening light.

V

IN the palace where Carlo Goldoni was born, a servant showed me an entirely new room near the roof, in which he said the great dramatist had composed his immortal comedies. As I knew, however, that Goldoni had left the house when a child, I could scarcely believe what the cicerone said, though I was glad he said it, and that he knew anything at all of Goldoni. It is a fine old Gothic palace on a small canal near the Frari, and on the Calle dei Nomboli, just across from a shop of indigestible pastry. It is known by an inscription, and by the medallion of the dramatist above the land-door; and there is no harm in looking in at the court on the ground-floor, where you may be pleased with the picturesque old stairway, wandering upward I hardly know how high, and adorned with many little heads of lions.

VI

SEVERAL palaces dispute the honor of being Bianca Cappello's birthplace, but Mutinelli awards the distinc-

bani, speaking of the friendship and frequent meetings of Titian and Sansovino, says: "Vivevano . . . allora ambedue di un amore fatto sacro dalle leggi divine, essendo moglie di Tiziano una Cecilia." I would not advise the reader to place too fond a trust in anything concerning the house of Titian. Mutinelli refers to but one house of the painter, while Ticozzi makes him proprietor of two.

tion to the palace at Sant' Appollinare near the Ponte Storto. One day a gondolier vaingloriously rowed us to the water-gate of the edifice through a very narrow, damp, and uncleanly canal, pretending that there was a beautiful staircase in its court. At the moment of our arrival, however, Bianca happened to be hanging out clothes from a window, and shrilly disclaimed the staircase, attributing this merit to another Palazzo Cappello. We were less pleased with her appearance here, than with that portrait of her which we saw on another occasion in the palace of a lady of her name and blood. This lady has since been married, and the name of Cappello is now extinct.

VII

THE Palazzo Mocenigo, in which Byron lived, is galvanized into ghastly newness by recent repairs, and as it is one of the ugliest palaces on the Grand Canal, it has less claim than ever upon one's interest. The custodian shows people the rooms where the poet wrote, dined, and slept, and I suppose it was from the basket balcony over the main door that one of his mistresses threw herself into the canal. Another of these interesting relicts is pointed out in the small butter-and-cheese shop which she keeps in the street leading from Campo Sant' Angelo to San Paterinan: she is a fat sinner, long past beauty, bald, and somewhat melancholy to behold. Indeed, Byron's memory is not a presence which I approach with pleasure, and I had most enjoyment in his palace when I thought of good-natured little Thomas Moore,

who once visited his lordship there. Byron himself hated the recollection of his life in Venice, and I am sure no one else need like it. But he is become a *cosa di Venezia*, and you cannot pass his palace without having it pointed out to you by the gondoliers. Early after my arrival in the city I made the acquaintance of an old smooth-shaven, smooth-mannered Venetian, who said he had known Byron, and who told me that he once swam with him from the Port of San Nicolò to his palace-door. The distance is something over three miles; but if the swimmers came in with the sea the feat was not so great as it seems, for the tide is as swift and strong as a mill-race. I think it would be impossible to make the distance against the tide.

XVI. COMMERCE

WANT OF MATERIAL FOR CONSULAR REPORTS — ABUNDANCE OF STATISTICS IN THE PAST: THE SALT TRADE, THE SLAVE TRADE, THE GREAT MAINLAND MARTS, TRAFFIC WITH THE EAST BY LAND AND SEA — THE STATE-PROTECTED ARGOSIES — THE FIVE GREAT FAIRS — THE VALUE OF VENETIAN COMMERCE IN 1423 — REVIVAL OF THE GLASS INDUSTRY AND THE MOSAIC ART — THE DECAY OF VENETIAN COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

TO make an annual report in September upon the Commercial Transactions of the port, was an official duty to which I looked forward at Venice with a vague feeling of injury during a year of almost uninterrupted tranquillity. It was not because the preparation of the report was an affair of so great labor that I shrank from it; but because the material was wanting with which to make a respectable show among my consular peers in the large and handsomely misprinted volume of Commercial Relations annually issued by the Congressional publishers. It grieved me that upstart ports like Marseilles, Liverpool, and Bremen should occupy so much larger space in this important volume than my beloved Venice; and it was with a feeling of profound mortification that I used to post my meagre account of a commerce that once was greater than all the rest of the world's together. I sometimes desperately

eked out the material furnished me in the statistics of the Venetian Chamber of Commerce by an agricultural essay on the disease of the grapes and its cure, or by a few wretched figures representative of a very slender mining interest in the province. But at last I determined to end these displeasures, and to make such researches into the history of her Commerce as should furnish me material for a report worthy of the high place Venice held in my reverence.

I

INDEED, it seemed to be by a sort of anachronism that I had ever mentioned contemporary Venetian commerce; and I turned with exultation from the phantom transactions of the present to that solid and magnificent prosperity of the past, of which the long-enduring foundations were laid in the earliest Christian times. For the new cities formed by the fugitives from barbarian invasion of the mainland, during the fifth century, had hardly settled around a common democratic government on the islands of the lagoons, when they began to develop maritime energies and resources; and long before this government was finally established at Rialto (the ancient seaport of Padua), or Venice had become the capital of the young Republic, the Veneti had thriftily begun to turn the wild invaders of the mainland to account, to traffic with them, and to make treaties of commerce with their rulers. Theodoric, the king of the Goths, who had fixed his capital at Ravenna, in the sixth century, would have been glad to introduce

Italian civilization among his people; but this warlike race were not prepared to practice the useful arts, and although they inhabited one of the most fruitful parts of Italy, with ample borders of sea, they were neither sailors nor tillers of the ground. The Venetians supplied them (at a fine profit, no doubt) with the salt made in the lagoons, and with wines brought from Istria. The Goths viewed with especial amazement their skill in the management of their river-craft, by means of which the dauntless traders ascended the shallowest streams, to penetrate the mainland, "running on the grass of the meadows, and between the stalks of the harvest field," —just as in this day our own western steamers are known to run in a heavy dew.

The Venetians continued to extend and confirm their commerce with those helpless and hungry warriors, and were ready also to open a lucrative trade with the Longobards when these descended into Italy about the year 570. They had, in fact, abetted the Longobards in their war with the Greek Emperor Justinian (who had opposed their incursion), and in return the barbarians gave them the right to hold great free marts or fairs on the shores of the lagoons, whither the people resorted from every part of the Longobard kingdom to buy the salt of the lagoons, grain from Istria and Dalmatia, and slaves from every country.

The slave trade formed then one of the most lucrative branches of Venetian commerce, as now it forms the greatest stain upon the annals of that commerce. The islanders, however, were not alone guilty of this

infamous traffic; other Italian states made profit of it, and it may be said to have been all but universal. But the Venetians were the most deeply involved in it, they pursued it the most unscrupulously, and they relinquished it the last. The pope forbade and execrated their commerce, and they sailed from the papal ports with cargoes of slaves for the infidels in Africa. In spite of the prohibitions of their own government, they bought Christians of kidnappers throughout Europe, and purchased the captives of the pirates on the seas, to sell them again to the Saracens. Being an ingenious people, they turned their honest penny over and over again: they sold the Christians to the Saracens, and then for certain sums ransomed them and restored them to their countries; they sold Saracens to the Christians, and plundered the infidels in similar transactions of ransom and restoration. It is not easy to fix the dates of the rise or fall of this slave trade; but slavery continued in Venice as late as the fifteenth century, and in earlier ages was so common that every prosperous person had two or three slaves.[1] The corruption of the citizens at this time is properly attributed in part to the existence of slavery among them; and Mutinelli goes so far as to declare that the institution impressed permanent traits on the populace, rendering them idle and indisposed to honest labor, by degrading labor and making it the office of bondmen.

[1] Mutinelli, *Del Costume Veneziano*. The present sketch of the history of Venetian commerce is based upon facts chiefly drawn from Mutinelli's delightful treatise, *Del Commercio dei Veneziani*.

Meanwhile, the Venetians enriched themselves by many other more blameless and legitimate forms of commerce, and gradually gathered into their grasp that whole trade of the East with Europe which passed through their hands for so many ages. After the dominion of the Franks was established in Italy in the eighth century, they began to supply that people, more luxurious than the Lombards, with the costly stuffs, the rich jewelry, and the perfumes of Byzantium; and held a great annual fair at the imperial city of Pavia, where they sold the Franks the manufactures of the luxurious Greeks, and whence in return they carried back to the East the grain, wine, wool, iron, lumber, and excellent armor of Lombardy.

II

FROM the time when they had assisted the Longobards against the Greeks, the Venetians found it to their interest to cultivate the friendship of the Eastern empire, until, in the twelfth century, they mastered the people so long caressed, and took their capital, under Enrico Dandolo. The privileges conceded to the wily Republican traders by the Greek Emperors were extraordinary in their extent and value. Otho, the western Cæsar, having succeeded the Franks in the dominion of Italy, had already absolved the Venetians from the annual tribute paid the Italian kings for the liberty of traffic, and had declared their commerce free throughout the Peninsula. In the mean time they had attacked and beaten the pirates of Dalmatia, and the Greeks now recognized

their rule all over Dalmatia, thus securing to the Republic every port on the eastern shores of the Adriatic. Then, as they aided the Greeks to repel the aggressions of the Saracens and Normans, their commerce was declared free in the ports of the empire, and they were allowed to trade without restriction in the cities, and to build warehouses and dépôts throughout the dominions of the Greeks, wherever they chose. The harvest they reaped from the vast field thus opened to their enterprise, must have more than compensated them for their losses in the barbarization of the Italian continent by the incessant civil wars which followed the disruption of the Lombard League, when trade and industry languished throughout Italy. When the Crusaders had taken the Holy Land, the King of Jerusalem bestowed upon the Venetians, in return for important services against the infidel, the same privileges conceded them by the Greek Emperor; and when, finally, Constantinople fell into the hands of the Crusaders (whom they had skillfully diverted from the reconquest of Palestine to the siege of the Greek metropolis), nearly all the Greek islands fell to the share of Venice; and the Latin emperors, who succeeded the Greeks in dominion, gave her such privileges as made her complete mistress of the commerce of the Levant.

From this opulent traffic the insatiable enterprise of the Republic turned, without relinquishing the old, to new gains in the farthest Orient. Against her trade the exasperated infidel had closed the Egyptian ports, but she did not scruple to coax the barbarous prince of the

Scythian Tartars, newly descended upon the shores of the Black Sea; and having secured his friendship, she proceeded, without imparting her design to her Latin allies at Constantinople, to plant a commercial colony at the mouth of the Don, where the city of Azof stands. Through this entrepôt, thenceforward, Venetian energy, with Tartar favor, directed the entire commerce of Asia with Europe, and incalculably enriched the Republic. The vastness of such a trade, even at that day, when the wants of men were far simpler and fewer than now, could hardly be overstated; and one nation then monopolized the traffic which is now free to the whole world. The Venetians bought their wares at the great marts of Samarcand, and crossed the country of Tartary in caravans to the shores of the Caspian Sea, where they set sail and voyaged to the River Volga, which they ascended to the point of its closest proximity to the Don. Their goods were then transported overland to the Don, and were again carried by water down to their mercantile colony at its mouth. Their ships, having free access to the Black Sea, could, after receiving the cargoes, return direct to Venice. The products of every country of Asia were carried into Europe by these tireless traffickers, who, enlightened and animated by the travels and discoveries of Matteo, Nicolò, and Marco Polo, penetrated the remotest regions, and brought away the treasures which the prevalent fears and superstitions of other nations would have deterred them from seeking, even if they had possessed the means of access to them.

The private enterprise of citizens was in every way protected and encouraged by the State, which did not, however, fail to make due profit out of it. The ships of the merchants always sailed to and from Venice in fleets, at stated seasons, seven fleets departing annually, — one for the Greek dominions, a second for Azof, a third for Trebizond, a fourth for Cyprus, a fifth for Armenia, a sixth for Spain, France, the Low Countries, and England, and a seventh for Africa. Each squadron of traders was accompanied and guarded from attacks of corsairs and other enemies, by a certain number of the state galleys, let severally to the highest bidders for the voyage, at a price never less than about five hundred dollars of our money. The galleys were all manned and armed by the State, and the crew of each amounted to three hundred persons, including a captain, four supercargoes, eight pilots, two carpenters, two calkers, a master of the oars, fifty cross-bowmen, three drummers, and two hundred rowers. The State also appointed a commandant of the whole squadron, with absolute authority to hear complaints, decide controversies, and punish offenses.

While the Republic was careful in the protection and discipline of its citizens in their commerce upon the seas, it was no less zealous for their security and its own dignity in their traffic with the continent of Europe. In that rude day, neither the life nor the property of the merchant who visited the ultramontane countries was safe; for the sorry device which he practiced, of taking with him a train of apes, buffoons, dancers, and singers, in order to divert his ferocious patrons from robbery and

murder, was not always successful. The Venetians, therefore, were forbidden by the State to trade in those parts; and the Bohemians, Germans, and Hungarians, who wished to buy their wares, were obliged to come to the lagoons and buy them at the great marts which were held in different parts of the city, and on the neighboring mainland. A triple purpose was thus served, — the Venetian merchants were protected in their lives and goods, the national honor was saved from insult, and many an honest zecchino was turned by the innkeepers and others who lodged and entertained the customers of the merchants.

IV

FIVE of these great fairs were held every week, the chief market being at Rialto; and the transactions in trade were carefully supervised by the servants of the State. Among the magistracies especially appointed for the orderly conduct of the foreign and domestic commerce were the so-called Mercantile Consuls (*Ufficio dei Consoli dei Mercanti*), whose special duty it was to see that the traffic of the nation received no hurt from the schemes of any citizen or foreigner, and to punish offenses of this kind with banishment and even graver penalties. They measured every ship about to depart, to learn if her cargo exceeded the lawful amount; they guarded creditors against debtors and protected poor debtors against the rapacity of creditors, and they punished thefts sustained by the merchants. It is curious to find, contemporary with this beneficent magistracy, a charge of equal dignity exercised by the College of Reprisals. A citizen

offended in his person or property abroad demanded justice of the government of the country in which the offense was committed. If the demand was refused, it was repeated by the Republic; if still refused, then the Republic, although at peace with the nation from which the offense came, seized any citizen of that country whom it could find, and, through its College of Reprisals, spoiled him of sufficient property to pay the damage done to its citizen. Finally, besides several other magistracies resident in Venice, the Republic appointed Consuls in its colonies and some foreign ports, to superintend the traffic of its citizens, and to compose their controversies. The Consuls were paid out of duties levied on the merchandise; they were usually nobles, and acted with the advice and consent of twelve other Venetian nobles or merchants.

V

At this time, and indeed, throughout its existence, the great lucrative monopoly of the Republic was the salt manufactured in the lagoons, and forced into every market, at rates that no other salt could compete with. Wherever alien enterprise attempted rivalry, it was instantly discouraged by Venice. There were troublesome salt mines, for example, in Croatia; and in 1381 the Republic caused them to be closed by paying the King of Hungary an annual pension of seven thousand crowns of gold. The exact income of the State, however, from the monopoly of salt, or from the various imposts and duties levied upon merchandise, it is now difficult to know, and it is impossible to compute ac-

curately the value or extent of Venetian commerce at any one time. It reached the acme of its prosperity under Tommaso Mocenigo, who was Doge from 1414 to 1423. There were then three thousand and three hundred vessels of the mercantile marine, giving employment to thirty-three thousand seamen, and netting to their owners a profit of forty per cent on the capital invested. How great has been the decline of this trade may be understood from the fact that in 1833 it amounted, according to the careful statistics of the Chamber of Commerce, to only $60,229,740, and that the number of vessels now owned in Venice is one hundred and fifty. As the total tonnage of these is but 26,000, it may be inferred that they are small craft, and in fact they are nearly all coasting vessels. They no longer bring to Venice the drugs and spices and silks of Samarcand, or carry her own rare manufactures to the ports of western Europe; but they sail to and from her canals with humble freights of grain, lumber, and hemp. Almost as many Greek as Venetian ships now visit the old queen, who once levied a tax upon every foreign vessel in her Adriatic; and the shipping from the cities of the kingdom of Italy exceeds her by ninety sail, while the tonnage of Great Britain is vastly greater. Her commerce has not only wasted to the shadow of its former magnitude, but it has also almost entirely lost its distinctive character. Glass of Murano is still exported to a value of about two millions of dollars annually; but in this industry, as in nearly all others of the lagoons, there is an annual decline. The trade of the

port falls off from one to three millions of dollars yearly, and the manufacturing interests of the province have dwindled in the same proportion. So far as silk is concerned, there has been an immediate cause for the decrease in the disease which has afflicted the cocoons for several years past. Wine and oil are at present articles of import solely, — the former because of a malady of the grape, the latter because of negligent cultivation of the olive.

VI

A CONSIDERABLE number of persons are still employed in the manufacture of objects of taste and ornament; and in the Ruga Vecchia at Rialto they yet make the famous Venetian gold chain, which few visitors to the city can have failed to notice hanging in strands and wound upon spools, in the shop windows of the Old Procuratie and the Bridge of Rialto. It is wrought of all degrees of fineness, and is always so flexile that it may be folded and wound in any shape. It is now no longer made in great quantity, and is chiefly worn by contadine (as a safe investment of their ready money),[1] and old-fashioned people of the city, who display the finer sort in skeins or strands. At Chioggia, I remember to have seen a babe at its christening in church literally manacled and shackled with Venetian chain; and the little girl who came to us one day, to show us the

[1] Certain foreigners living in Venice were one day astonished to find their maid-servant in possession of a mass of this chain, and thought it their business to reprove her extravagance. "Signori," she exclaimed paradoxically, "if I keep my money, I spend it; if I buy this chain, it is always money (*è sempre soldi*)."

splendors in which she had appeared at a *disputa* (examination of children in doctrine), was loaded with it. Formerly, in the luxurious days of the Republic, it is said the chain was made as fine as sewing-silk, and worn embroidered on Genoa velvet by the patrician dames. It had then a cruel interest from the fact that its manufacture, after a time, cost the artisans their eyesight, so nice and subtle was the work. I could not help noticing that the workmen at their shops in the Ruga Vecchia still suffer in their eyes, even though the work is much coarser. I do not hope to describe the chain, except by saying that the links are horseshoe and oval shaped, and are connected by twos, — an oval being welded crosswise into a horseshoe, and so on, each two being linked loosely into the next.

An infinitely more important art, in which Venice was distinguished a thousand years ago, has recently been revived there by Signor Salviati, an enthusiast in mosaic painting. His establishment is on the Grand Canal, not far from the Academy, and you might go by the old palace quite unsuspicious of the ancient art stirring with new life in its breast. "A. Salviati, Avvocato," is the legend of the bell-pull, and you do not by any means take this legal style for that of the restorer of a neglected art, and a possessor of forgotten secrets in gilded glass and "smalts," as they term the small delicate rods of vitreous substance with which the wonders of the art are achieved. But inside of the palace are some two hundred artisans at work, — cutting the smalts and glass into the minute fragments of which the mosaics are made,

grinding and smoothing these fragments, polishing the completed works, and reproducing, with incredible patience and skill, the lights and shadows of the pictures to be copied.

You first enter the rooms of those whose talent distinguishes them as artists, and in whose work all the wonderful neatness and finish and long-suffering toil of the Byzantines are visible, as well as an original life and inspiration alike impossible and profane to the elder mosaicists. Each artist has at hand a great variety of the slender stems of smalts already mentioned, and breaking these into minute fragments as he proceeds, he inserts them in the bed of cement prepared to receive his picture, and thus counterfeits in enduring material the perishable work of the painter.

In other rooms artisans are at work upon various tasks of *marqueterie*,— table-tops, album-covers, paperweights, brooches, pins, and the like,— and in others they are sawing the smalts and glass into strips, and grinding the edges. Passing through yet another room, where the finished mosaic-works — of course not the pictorial mosaics — are polished by machinery, we enter the storeroom, where the crowded shelves display blocks of smalts and glass of endless variety of color. By far the greater number of these colors are discoveries or improvements of the venerable mosaicist Lorenzo Radi, who has found again the Byzantine secrets of counterfeiting, in vitreous paste, aventurine (gold stone), onyx, chalcedony, malachite, and other natural stones, and who has been praised by the Academy of

Fine Arts in Venice for producing mosaics even more durable in tint and workmanship than those of the Byzantine artists.

In an upper story of the palace a room is set apart for the exhibition of the many beautiful and costly things which the art of the establishment produces. Here, besides pictures in mosaic, there are cunningly inlaid tables and cabinets, caskets, rich vases of chalcedony mounted in silver, and delicately wrought jewelry, while the floor is covered with a mosaic pavement ordered for the Viceroy of Egypt. There are here, moreover, to be seen the designs furnished by the Crown Princess of Prussia for the mosaics of the Queen's Chapel at Windsor. These, like all other pictures and decorations in mosaic, are completed in the establishment on the Grand Canal, and are afterward put up as wholes in the places intended for them.

VII

IN Venice nothing in decay is strange. But it is startling to find her in her old age nourishing into fresh life an art that, after feebly preserving the memory of painting for so many centuries, had decorated her prime only with the glories of its decline; — for Kugler ascribes the completion of the mosaics of the church of St. Cyprian in Murano to the year 882, and the earliest mosaics of St. Mark's to the tenth or eleventh centuries, when the Greek Church had already laid her ascetic hand on Byzantine art, and fixed its conventional forms, paralyzed its motives, and forbidden its inspirations.

I think, however, one would look about him in vain for other evidences of a returning prosperity in the lagoons. The old prosperity of Venice was based upon her monopoly of the most lucrative traffic in the world, as we have already seen, — upon her exclusive privileges in foreign countries, upon the enlightened zeal of her government, and upon men's imperfect knowledge of geography, and the barbarism of the rest of Europe, as well as upon the indefatigable industry and intelligent enterprise of her citizens. America was still undiscovered; the overland route to India was the only one known; the people of the continent outside of Italy were unthrifty serfs, ruled and ruined by unthrifty lords. The whole world's ignorance, pride, and sloth were Venetian gain; and the religious superstitions of the day, which, gross as they were, embodied perhaps its noblest and most hopeful sentiment, were a source of immense profit to the sharp-witted mistress of the Adriatic. It was the age of penances, pilgrimages, and relic-hunting, and the wealth which she wrung from the devotion of others was exceedingly great. Her ships carried the pilgrims to and from the Holy Land; her adventurers ransacked Palestine and the whole Orient for the bones and memorials of the saints; and her merchants sold the precious relics throughout Europe at prodigious advance upon first cost.

But the foundations of this prosperity were at last sapped by the tide of wealth which poured into Venice from every quarter of the world. Her citizens brought back the vices as well as the luxuries of the debauched

Orient, and the city became that seat of splendid idleness and proud corruption which it continued till the Republic fell. It is needless to rehearse the story of her magnificence and decay. At the time when the hardy, hungry people of other nations were opening paths to prosperity by land and sea, the Venetians, gorged with the spoils of ages, relinquished their old habits of daring enterprise, and dropped back into luxury and indolence. Their incessant wars with the Genoese began, and though they signally defeated the rival Republic in battle, Genoa finally excelled in commerce. A Greek prince had arisen to dispute the sovereignty of the Latin Emperors, whom the Venetians had helped to place upon the Byzantine throne; the Genoese, seeing the favorable fortunes of the Greek, threw the influence of their arms and intrigues in his favor, and the Latins were expelled from Constantinople in 1271. The new Greek Emperor had promised to give the sole navigation of the Black Sea to his allies, together with the church and palaces possessed by the Venetians in his capital, and he bestowed also upon the Genoese the city of Smyrna. It does not seem that he fulfilled literally all his promises, for the Venetians still continued to sail to and from their colony of Tana, at the head of the Sea of Azof, though it is certain that they had no longer the sovereignty of those waters; and the Genoese now planted on the shores of the Black Sea three large and important colonies to serve as entrepôts for the trade taken from their rivals. The oriental traffic of the Venetians was maintained through Tana, however, for nearly two centuries later,

when, in 1410, the Mongol Tartars, under Tamerlane, fell upon the devoted colony, took, sacked, burned, and utterly destroyed it. This was the first terrible blow to the most magnificent commerce which the world had ever seen, and which had endured for ages. No wonder that, on the day of Tana's fall, portents of woe were seen at Venice, — that meteors appeared, that demons rode the air, that the winds and waters rose and blew down houses and swallowed ships! A thousand persons are said to have perished in the calamities which commemorated a stroke so mortally disastrous to the national grandeur. After that the Venetians humbly divided with their ancient foes the possession and maintenance of the Genoese colony of Caffa, and continued, with greatly diminished glory, their traffic in the Black Sea; till, the Turks having taken Constantinople, and the Greeks having acquired under their alien masters a zeal for commerce unknown to them during the times of their native princes, the Venetians were finally, on the first pretext of war, expelled from those waters in which they had latterly maintained themselves only by payment of heavy tribute to the Turks.

In the mean time the industrial arts, in which Venice had heretofore excelled, began to be practiced elsewhere, and the Florentines and the English took that lead in the manufactures of the world which the English still retain. The league of the Hanseatic cities was established and rose daily in importance. At London, at Bruges, at Bergen, and Novogorod banks were opened under the protection and special favor of the Hanseatic League;

its ships were preferred to any other, and, the tide of commerce setting northward, the cities of the League persecuted the foreigners who would have traded in their ports. On the west, Barcelona began to dispute the preëminence of Venice in the Mediterranean, and Spanish salt was brought to Italy itself and sold by the enterprising Catalonians. Their corsairs vexed Venetian commerce everywhere; and in that day, as in our own, private English enterprise was employed in piratical depredations on the traffic of a friendly power.

The Portuguese also began to extend their commerce, once so important, and catching the rage for discovery then prevalent, infested every sea in search of unknown land. One of their navigators, sailing by a chart which the monk Fra Mauro, in his convent on the island of San Michele, had put together from the stories of travelers, and his own guesses at geography, discovered the Cape of Good Hope, and the trade of India with Europe was turned in that direction, and the old overland traffic perished. The Venetian monopoly of this traffic was gone long before; if its recovery had been possible, it would now have been useless to the declining prosperity of the Republic.

It remained for Christopher Columbus, born of that Genoese nation which had hated the Venetians so long and so bitterly, to make the discovery of America, and thus to give the death-blow to the supremacy of Venice. While all these discoveries were taking place, the old queen of the seas had been weighed down with many and unequal wars. Her naval power had been every-

where crippled; her revenues had been reduced; her possessions, one after one, had been lopped away; and at the time Columbus was on his way to America half Europe, united in the League of Cambray, was attempting to crush the Republic of Venice.

The whole world was now changed. Commerce sought new channels; fortune smiled on other nations. How Venice dragged onward from the end of her commercial greatness, and tottered with a delusive splendor to her political death, is surely one of the saddest of stories if not the sternest of lessons.

END OF VOLUME I

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